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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE GIFT AND ITS ROLE IN THE ODYSSEY

BY

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A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE GIFT AND ITS ROLE IN THE ODYSSEY

submitted by MADELEINE JANE BAILEY

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Supervisor

Date December 1st, 1975.

DEDICATION

To my parents and Ian, my husband.

ABSTRACT

In this thesis a standard anthropological work is examined, and the picture that it portrays of gift-giving among primitive and archaic societies is compared with the so-called 'legendary' society of the Odyssey. The thesis attempts to show how closely the gift customs of the Odyssey correspond with those which Marcel Mauss analysed in a study of many primitive societies.

In Chapter One, the types of gifts and acts of giving we see in the Odyssey are described, with a discussion of the true meaning of several Homeric words associated with gifts.

Chapter Two is in two parts: the first is a summary of the observations Mauss makes about gift-giving in primitive society; the second part is a detailed study of gift-giving in the Odyssey with direct comparisons between the text of Homer and Mauss' work. The chapter ends with an attempt to solve the problem of marriage gifts in Homer, by using anthropological evidence.

Chapter Three is devoted to conclusions about the society of the Odyssey, and about the validity of Mauss' analysis of gift-giving.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE HOMERIC CONCEPT OF GIFT-GIVING

Moses Finley, in "The World of Odysseus" [1], suggested that the picture of gift-giving that we see in the Homeric poems is consistent with the findings of Marcel Mauss. Mauss analysed many primitive and archaic societies to determine the function and importance of the gift, and in his "Essai sur le Don" [2] he drew general conclusions about the role of gift-giving. He intended that these would be applied to every society. The ancient Greeks are not included in his study; the purpose of this thesis is to examine how closely gift-giving in the society of the Odyssey corresponds with Mauss' findings.

It is not the aim of this thesis to estimate the value of the Odyssey as an historical document. Some scholars who have looked at Homeric society from an historian's point of view deny that the picture of gift-giving is drawn from real life, and consider that

> "The giving and receiving of gifts is rather an integral part of the heroic ideal."[3]

If, however, after consideration of the functions of the gift in the Odyssey, it is clear that these functions are consistent with Mauss' analysis throughout, then, in

Finley's words[4]:

> "...we are driven to the conclusion that, by a most remarkable intuition, Homer was a predecessor of Marcel Mauss, except that he (or his tradition) invented an institution which nearly three thousand years later Mauss discovered to be a social reality."

Thus a study of gift-giving could become a key factor in determining the anthropological value of the Homeric portrayal of early Greek society.

> "The word 'gift' is not to be misconstrued. It may be stated as a flat rule of both primitive and archaic society that no one ever gave anything, whether goods or services or honours, without proper recompense, real or wishful, immediate or years away, to himself or to his kin. The act of giving was,therefore, in an essential sense always the first half of a reciprocal action, the other half of which was the counter-gift."[5]

This statement by Finley shows the importance of the role of the gift in Homeric society. For the modern concept of gift is not the same: to us, a gift is a spontaneous or customary kindness which does not expect a return. At certain festivals, however, such as Christmas, it is the usual thing for gifts to be exchanged, but no obligation to reciprocate (except perhaps one of conscience) exists.

That is the first difference. Secondly we find that the word 'gift' covers all manner of things: 'goods or services or honours', as Finley puts it[6]. There are

many cases of gift-giving in Homer but they are not all alike: they can be subdivided into various categories to include the concrete gift, the abstract gift, the 'almost-trading'gift, the bribe, the 'making amends' gift, the sacrifice, alms to beggars, and many more. In Finley's words (p.63):

> "No single detail in the life of the heroes receives so much attention in the Iliad and the Odyssey as gift-giving, and always there is frank reference to adequacy, appropriateness, recompense."

Our study is confined to the Odyssey, since in that epic itself we have a large collection of instances of gift-giving.

The words that we find in the Odyssey which describe a type of gift, or relate to gift-giving in general, are as follows: λοιβή, a drink-offering which is usually made to the gods as a libation before a meal; εὐαγγέλιον, a reward given for good news which comes true; κειμήλιον, a gift given to a guest as a valuable keepsake from his host; ἕδνα, wedding gifts; ξείνιον, a gift of hospitality usually given on parting, and ξείνια, hospitality in general; δωτίνη, a presentation of specific gifts of hospitality; ἀμοιβή, a reciprocal gift or simply 'exchange'; ἀπριάτην, 'with no exchange-gift forthcoming'; ἐπίβαθρον, a gift given in exchange for a ferry trip; ὁδοιπόριον, a reward given for completing a

sea-mission; προίξ, a free gift; δόσι, a general term for an act of giving; δῶρον, the most common and unspecific word for a gift; δίδωμι, I give (the most general word); ζωάγρια, a gift given to someone who saves one's life; μοιχάγρια, a gift of compensation given by an apprehended adulterer to the husband of his mistress; and finally, δῶτηρες ἐάων, 'givers of good things', an epithet of the gods.

Alms to beggars is an important theme in the Odyssey, since a sizeable part of the plot [7] involves Odysseus in the guise of a beggar who is attempting to remain unsuspected in his own palace. His actions as a beggar reveal the Homeric attitude towards the giving of alms. Telemachus hands some food to the swineherd and tells him (17.345-348):

> δὸς τῷ ξείνῳ ταῦτα φέρων αὐτόν τε κέλευε
> αἰτίζειν μάλα πάντας ἐποιχόμενον μνηστῆρας:
> αἰδὼς δ' οὐκ ἀγαθὴ κεχρημένῳ ἀνδρὶ παρεῖναι.
>
> (Take these and give them to the stranger, and tell him to go round begging from all the suitors; for modesty does not look good on a needy man.) [8]

After this, Odysseus begs from Antinous, one of the suitors, and says (17.415-421):

> δός, φίλος: οὐ μέν μοι δοκέει ὁ κάκιστος Ἀχαιῶν
> ἔμμεναι, ἀλλ' ὤριστος, ἐπεὶ βασιλῆϊ ἔοικας.
> τῷ σε χρὴ δόμεναι καὶ λώϊον ἠέ περ ἄλλοι
> σίτου, ἐγὼ δέ κέ σε κλείω κατ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν.
> καὶ γὰρ ἐγώ ποτε οἶκον ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ἔναιον
> ὄλβιος ἀφνειὸν καὶ πολλάκι δόσκον ἀλήτῃ
> τοίῳ, ὁποῖος ἔφι καὶ ὅτεν κεχρημένος ἔλθοι:

(Friend, give me some gift, for you do not seem to me to be the worst of the Achaeans, but the best, since you look like a king. Thus you must give me some food, and more than the others, and I would spread your name all over the world. For even I once lived as a rich man in a wealthy house among men, and often I would give to a wanderer, whatever sort of man he might be and for whatever reason he came.)

Odysseus' tone sounds almost disrespectful, and suggests that begging and receiving are a matter of course [9]. Telemachus, however, has previously said that modesty does not look good on a needy man (17.347)[10]. It seems as though alms were given indiscriminately, regardless of who the beggar was or his reason for coming. The alms usually took the form of food. All who ask for them have a right to receive them. At first the giving of alms appears to be a one-way gift; Odysseus, however, is willing to make a return in the only way a beggar can: he promises to sing the praises of his benefactor all over the earth (17.418). Hence a service of a kind is offered in exchange for food. In this instance, Antinous threatens the beggar Odysseus, but he is considered to be wrong in doing so. Odysseus rounds on him and says (17.454-457):

ὦ πόποι, οὐκ ἄρα σοί γ'ἐπὶ εἴδεϊ καὶ φρένες ἦσαν:
οὐ σύ γ'ἂν ἐξ οἴκου σῷ ἐπιστάτῃ οὐδ'ἄλα δοίης,
ὃς νῦν ἀλλοτρίοισι παρήμενος οὔ τί μοι ἔτλης
σίτου ἀποπροελὼν δόμεναι: τὰ δὲ πολλὰ πάρεστιν.

(You wretch! Your brains certainly do not match up to your looks! You wouldn't even give a pinch of salt from your supplies to your beggar, you who are now sitting in another's house yet couldn't bear to break a bit of bread to give to me: and there is plenty there.)

In this outburst Odysseus is voicing his own opinion regardless of his disguise. The rest of the company, we are told, feel very indignant (17.481) at Antinous' rough treatment of Odysseus (he throws a stool at him, 17.467). This is because Odysseus curses Antinous by the gods (17.475-476):

ἀλλ'εἴ που πτωχῶν γε θεοὶ καὶ ἐρινύες εἰσίν,
Ἀντίνοον πρὸ γάμοιο τέλος θανάτοιο κιχείη.

(But if perhaps there are any gods and furies for beggars, may the final end of death find Antinous before his wedding day.)

The indignation of the suitors is caused by fear of the gods. One suitor says (17.483-487):

Ἀντίνο', οὐ μὲν κάλ'ἔβαλες δύστηνον ἀλήτην,
οὐλόμεν', εἰ δή πού τις ἐπουράνιος θεός ἐστι.
καί τε θεοὶ ξείνοισιν ἐοικότες ἀλλοδαποῖσι,
παντοῖοι τελέθοντες, ἐπιστρωφῶσι πόληας,
ἀνθρώπων ὕβριν τε καὶ εὐνομίην ἐφορῶντες.

(Antinous, you did wrong to hit the wretched vagrant; you are doomed if by chance he is really some god from heaven . And the gods do look like strangers from abroad, being in all kinds of guises and wander around the cities, watching the good and bad behaviour of men.)

It may be concluded that beggars were almost sure to receive alms, since those who refused to give risked divine retribution. Hence those in a position to give felt themselves under an obligation to do so, if they were god-fearing.

Gifts are often given to make someone feel kindly disposed towards the donor. For example, Odysseus tells the Cyclops, Polyphemus, that he has brought some wine for him so that the Cyclops will be charitable and help him on his way (9.349-350):

σοὶ δ'αὖ λοιβὴν φέρον, εἴ μ'ἐλεήσας
οἴκαδε πέμψειας:

(But I was bringing it for you as a drink-offering, in the hope that you would pity me and send me home.)

On this occasion Homer has used λοιβήν for the gift. This word means a sacrificial drink-offering elsewhere in the epics [11]. Probably Odysseus is making a grim play on words: the feast (the usual place for a libation) which Polyphemus will consume consists of Odysseus' comrades; also the word flatters the Cyclops since it suggests he is a god.

Another reason for giving gifts is to make amends to someone for an unfair action by the donor, For example, King Alcinous tells Euryalus that he must make amends to Odysseus because he insulted him [12](8.396-397):

Εὐρύαλος δέ ἑ αὐτὸν ἀρεσσάσθω ἐπέεσσι
καὶ δώρῳ, ἐπεὶ οὔ τι ἔπος κατὰ μοῖραν ἔειπεν.

(Euryalus must appease him with words and
and a gift, since the speech he made was
in no way fair.)

δῶρον, the most common word for a gift, is the one used in this passage. Sometimes gifts are given to compensate for some possession which has been taken away from the recipient by the donor. For example, the suitors offer to compensate Odysseus for all the supplies they have consumed in his house (22.55-59). They describe in detail what they will offer as compensation (22.57-58):

τιμὴν ἀμφὶς ἄγοντες ἐεικοσάβοιον ἕκαστος
χαλκόν τε χρυσόν τ' ἀποδώσομεν,

(Each for himself bringing the approximate
worth of twenty oxen, we shall pay you
back in bronze and gold.)

There is a special type of compensation: that which a master gives to a slave in recognition of good service. The swineherd Eumaeus tells his guest, the beggar (Odysseus in disguise), how his master would have looked after him if he had returned from the Trojan wars (14.62-66):

ὅς κεν ἔμ' ἐνδυκέως ἐφίλει καὶ κτῆσιν ὄπασσεν,
οἷα τε ὠ οἰκῆϊ ἄναξ εὔθυμος ἔδωκεν,
οἶκόν τε κλῆρόν τε πολυμνήστην τε γυναῖκα,
ὃς οἱ πολλὰ κάμησι, θεὸς δ' ἐπὶ ἔργον ἄέξῃ,
ὡς καὶ ἐμοὶ τόδε ἔργον ἄέξεται, ᾧ ἐπιμίμνω.

(He would have unstintingly cared for me
and given me possessions, even the sort of

things a kind master would have given his slave, a house and an allotment and a much-wooed wife: to a slave who works hard for him, and the gods speed the work, as they have sped for me this labour which I pursue.)

These sentiments are echoed later: Odysseus has revealed himself to Eumaeus and the other slaves as their master returned from the war; he grants them the very wish that Eumaeus in ignorance expressed to Odysseus [13]. Odysseus says (21.214-216):

ἄξομαι ἀμφοτέροις ἀλόχους καὶ κτήματ'ὀπάσσω
οἰκία τ'ἐγγὺς ἐμεῖο τετυγμένα: καί μοι ἔπειτα
Τηλεμάχου ἑτάρω τε κασιγνήτω τε ἔσεσθον.
(I shall get wives for each of you and give you possessions and have houses built near mine: and from then to me you will be both friends and brothers of Telemachus.)

The gifts are not all material ones: just as important is Odysseus' promise to treat his former slaves as the friends and brothers of his son.

Gifts are sometimes given as a reward for a good service. Often the service takes the form of news about someone: when the news proves to be true, the messenger receives his reward. For example, Odsseus, in disguise, tells Eumaeus that his master will return (14.151-154):

ἀλλ'ἐγὼ οὐκ αὖτως μυθήσομαι, ἀλλὰ σὺν ὅρκῳ,
ὡς νεῖται Ὀδυσεύς: εὐαγγέλιον δέ μοι ἔστω
αὐτίκ', ἐπεί κεν κεῖνος ἰὼν τὰ ἃ δώμαθ'ἵκηται:
ἕσσαι με χλαῖνάν τε χιτῶνά τε, εἵματα καλά:
(But I will not just say it, I will swear that Odysseus is coming back: and let there be a good news reward for me the

moment he comes in his house; dress me
in a cloak and tunic, fine clothes;)

The εὐαγγέλιον, the 'good news gift', is thus given to someone when his news comes true. Penelope, when she is told (by Odysseus in disguise) that Odysseus will return that very year, says (19.309-311):

αἲ γὰρ τοῦτο, ξεῖνε, ἔπος τετελεσμένον εἴη:
τῷ κε τάχα γνοίης φιλότητά τε πολλά τε δῶρα
ἐξ ἐμεῦ, ὡ ἄν τίς σε συναντόμενος μακαρίζοι.
(Stranger, would that these words of
yours would come true! Then you would
soon know friendship and many gifts
from me, so that any man who meets you
would call you blessed.)

A prize for winning a contest is another kind of gift we find in the Odyssey (11.545-547) [14]:

τὴν μὲν ἐγὼ νίκησα δικαζόμενος παρὰ νηυσὶ
τεύχεσιν ἀμφ' Ἀχιλῆος: ἔθηκε δὲ πότνια μήτηρ.
παῖδες δὲ Τρώων δίκασαν καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη.
(I beat him defending my claim by the
ships for the arms of Achilles, and his
queenly mother had set them as a prize.
And the sons of the Trojans and Pallas
Athene were the judges.)

Bribery is a common theme in the Odyssey. Perhaps its frequency proves how willing the Homeric Greeks are to receive gifts. The gift for a bribe is usually the Homeric equivalent of money. For example, Aegisthus bribes someone to watch for Agamemnon's return (4.525-526):

Αἴγισθος δολόμητις ἄγων, ὑπὸ δ' ἔσχετο μισθὸν
χρυσοῦ δοιὰ τάλαντα:

(Wily Aegisthus led [him there], and
promised a reward of two talents of gold;)

In another example, a woman is bribed to command her husband to go to battle (and consequently get killed) (11.326-327):

Μαῖράν τε Κλυμένην τε ἴδον στυγερήν τ'Ἐριφύλην,
ἣ χρυσὸν φίλου ἀνδρὸς ἐδέξατο τιμήεντα.

(I saw Maira and Clymene and hateful
Eriphyle, who received precious gold for
her dear husband's life.)

The Homeric Greeks have no coinage, so precious metals measured by weight [16] are used as a substitute. Bribes, however, are expressed as gifts, not money, in Homer (11.520-521):

πολλοὶ δ'ἀμφ'αὐτὸν ἑταῖροι
Κήτειοι κτείνοντο γυναίων εἵνεκα δώρων.

(Many of his Ceteian comrades were slaughtered around him on account of the gifts a woman had received.)[17]

A similar situation occurs in 15.247:

ἀλλ'ὄλετ'ἐν Θήβησι γυναίων εἵνεκα δώρων.

(But he perished in Thebes on account of the gifts a woman had received.)[18]

It is clear from these examples that Homer does not employ one specific word where we would use the word 'bribe'. The following example shows the use of yet another word (13.273):

ἐλλισάμην, καί σφιν μενοεικέα λῃΐδα δῶκα

(I begged them, and gave them a tempting
bribe of spoil.)

λῃΐδα, booty, refers to the source of the bribe, yet the word is used to describe the bribe itself.

Although we ourselves think of booty as goods plundered from an enemy and in no sense as a gift, the Homeric concept of booty plays an important part in gift-giving. A returning warrior gains respect from his people for the amount of booty he has amassed, just as the prince who returns loaded with gifts from other leaders gains respect. The valuable booty which has been plundered is put into the warrior's treasure store, perhaps for use as a gift later. Odysseus' men, jealous of all the things he is accumulating, say (10.38-42):

> Ὦ πόποι, ὡς ὅδε πᾶσι φίλος καὶ τίμιός ἐστιν
> ἀνθρώποις, ὅτεών τε πόλιν καὶ γαῖαν ἵκηται.
> πολλὰ μὲν ἐκ Τροίης ἄγεται κειμήλια καλὰ
> λῃΐδος: ἡμεῖς δ' αὖτε ὁμὴν ὁδὸν ἐκτελέσαντες
> οἰκαδε νισσόμεθα κενεὰς σὺν χεῖρας ἔχοντες.
>
> (Alas! How this man is dear to and honoured by all men, whose city and land he reaches. He is bringing many lovely souvenirs of booty from Troy; but we in our turn, who have covered the same road, are heading home with empty hands.)

The words used to describe the booty in this passage are κειμήλια καλὰ λῃΐδος, 'lovely treasures of booty'. κειμήλια is usually reserved to describe gifts given to visitors as souvenirs of the country they visit. For example [19], Telemachus tells Menelaus (15.159):

> ἔρχομαι, αὐτὰρ ἄγω κειμήλια πολλὰ καὶ ἐσθλά.

(I am going, and I am taking many fine treasures.)

Another interesting example is given in 19.272-273:

αὐτὰρ ἄγει κειμήλια πολλὰ καὶ ἐσθλὰ
αἰτίζων ἀνὰ δῆμον:

(And he is bringing many fine treasures, as he begs throughout the land.)

αἰτίζων has the sense of asking or even begging for something. Invariably when it is used in the Odyssey it clearly has this meaning (4.649-651):

αὐτὸς ἑκὼν οἱ δῶκα: τί κεν ῥέξειε καὶ ἄλλος,
ὁππότ' ἀνὴρ τοιοῦτος, ἔχων μελεδήματα θυμῷ,
αἰτίζῃ; χαλεπόν κεν ἀνήνασθαι δόσιν εἶη.

(I myself willingly gave [the ship] to him; what would any other man do, when such a man begs with a carewcrn heart? It would be difficult to refuse the gift.)

The statement at 19.272-273 is not said in any derogatory sense: begging for treasure is obviously a respected activity. All the uses of κειμήλια or the singular κειμήλιον suggest very precious articles, small in size, which can be taken home and kept in the treasure room. Telemachus tells his friend Mentes (Athene in disguise) (1.312-313):

τιμῆεν, μάλα καλόν, ὅ τοι κειμήλιον ἔσται
ἐξ ἐμεῦ, οἷα φίλοι ξεῖνοι ξείνοισι διδοῦσι.

(A valuable [gift], a very fine one, which will be your keepsake from me, such as dear guest-friends give to guest-friends.) [20]

When Telemachus is visiting Menelaus and is offered gifts by him (three horses, a chariot and a goblet

[4.590-592]), he tells Menelaus (4.600):

δῶρον δ' ὅττι κέ μοι δοίης, κειμήλιον ἔστω:

(As for the gift, whatsoever you may give me, let it be a thing to treasure.)

Hence it seems that κειμήλια are small precious gifts. For instead of the chariot and horses, Menelaus offers a mixing bowl (4.615). It seems that a man's wealth lies in these objects: Telemachus tells Menelaus that he must return home (15.91):

ἤ τί μοι ἐκ μεγάρων κειμήλιον ἐσθλὸν ὄληται.

(Or any noble treasure lost from my palace.)

Such is their importance.

The distinction between booty acquired by plundering and treasures acquired by visiting other countries seems to be non-existent. There is no moral distinction: the aim is to amass as much as possible, regardless of how it is gained. The following example shows the Homeric attitude to booty (14.231-234):

καί μοι μάλα τύγχανε πολλά.
τῶν ἐξαιρεύμην μενοεικέα, πολλὰ δ' ὀπίσσω
λάγχανον: αἶψα δὲ οἶκος ὀφέλλετο, καί ῥα ἔπειτα
δεινός τ' αἰδοῖός τε μετὰ Κρήτεσσι τετύγμην.

(And a lot [of booty] fell into my hands.
I picked out the tempting things, and
much I acquired later by lot. And quickly
my estate increased, and then I became
feared and respected among the Cretans.)

Yet not all booty is considered to be acquired by right, and it is hard to know where Homeric morality

draws the line. Warriors returning home from war with huge quantities which they have plundered are praised and respected; and yet Eumaeus says (14.85-88):

> καὶ μὲν δυσμενέες καὶ ἀνάρσιοι, οἵ τ' ἐπὶ γαίης
> ἀλλοτρίης βῶσιν καί σφι Ζεὺς λῃΐδα δώῃ.
> πλησάμενοι δέ τε νῆας ἔβαν οἰκόνδε νέεσθαι,
> καὶ μέν τοῖς ὄπιδος κρατερὸν δέος ἐν φρεσὶ πίπτει.
>
> (Even hostile enemies, who land on foreign soil, and Zeus grants them booty. They fill their ships and set off homewards, and a great dread of divine retribution attacks their minds.)

It seems that the only way booty can rightfully be taken is by defeating a foreign city in battle.

In a sense, gift-giving is involved in the distribution of booty. The plunder is divided up equally, while the leaders are given choice extra items in acknowledgement of their position. Odysseus tells the Phaeacians (9.41-42):

> ἐκ πόλιος δ' ἀλόχους καὶ κτήματα πολλὰ λαβόντες
> δασσάμεθ', ὡς μή τίς μοι ἀτεμβόμενος κίοι ἴσης.
>
> (We took women and many treasures from the city and divided them, so that no one through me would be without an equal share.)[21]

When Odysseus and his men go out hunting, the spoils are divided up as follows (9.159-160):

> νῆες μέν μοι ἕποντο δυώδεκα, ἐς δὲ ἑκάστην
> ἐννέα λάγχανον αἶγες: ἐμοὶ δὲ δέκ' ἔξελον οἴῳ.
>
> (Twelve ships were in my fleet; nine goats were allotted to each ship; they picked out ten for me alone.)

Buying and selling also takes place in the Odyssey; since there is no coinage, it takes the form of trading. Slaves are bought and sold; usually we are told that a high price was paid [22], although we do not learn what the price is and in what form it is paid. We have one example, however, of the equivalent worth of a slave. We are told in 1.431 that Laertes bought a slave:

πρωθήβην ἔτ' ἐοῦσαν, ἐεικοσάβοια δ' ἔδωκεν,

(When she was still in her youth, and he gave the worth of twenty oxen for her.)

The idea of exchange is clear in this example: the verb ἔδωκεν means 'he gave', not 'he paid'.

We also have an example of commercial trading (1.184):

ἐσ Τεμέσην μετὰ χαλκόν, ἄγω δ' αἴθωνα σίδηρον.

(I am carrying gleaming iron to Temese and I am after bronze.)

Presumably slaves were exchanged for precious metal: gold, silver or bronze, weighed out in talents.

Another type of gift we find in the Odyssey is that which one receives on someone's death. Odysseus, when inventing a story about his origins, says that when his father died, his half-brothers (14.210):

αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ μάλα πᾶῦρα δόσαν καὶ οἰκί' ἔνειμαν.

(But to me they gave a very poor share and

allotted me a house.")[23]

Sometimes gifts are bequests from father to son (21.32-33):

> τὸ πρὶν μέν ῥ' ἐφόρει μέγας Εὔρυτος, αὐτὰρ ὁ παιδὶ
> κάλλιπ' ἀποθνήσκων ἐν δώμασιν ὑψηλοῖσι.
>
> (Which great Eurytus had previously carried, but had left to his son when he died in the high palace.)

Also there are instances of gifts being given from one generation to another, not necessarily on death (19.411-413):

> ἔλθῃ Παρνησόνδ', ὅθι πού μοι κτήματ' ἔασι,
> τῶν οἱ ἐγὼ δώσω καὶ μιν χαίροντ' ἀποπέμψω."
> Τῶν ἕνεκ' ἦλθ' Ὀδυσεύς, ἵνα οἱ πόροι ἀγλαὰ δῶρα.
>
> ([When] he comes to Parnassus, where my property is, I shall give him some of it, and send him home rejoicing." Odysseus came for this cause, in order to get fine gifts from him.)

And in another example Odysseus tells of the gifts which his father, Laertes, gave him as a small boy (24.340-342):

> ὄγχνας μοι δῶκας τρισκαίδεκα καὶ δέκα μηλέας,
> συκέας τεσσαράκοντ': ὄρχους δέ μοι ὧδ' ὀνόμηνας
> δώσειν πεντήκοντα,
>
> (You gave me thirteen peartrees and ten appletrees, and forty fig-trees; and at the same time you named the fifty vines you would give me.)

Another important group of gifts are those reputed to come from the gods. Such gifts may be metaphorical or actual objects. We have an example

of the former in 2.116-118 [24]:

τὰ φρονέουσ' ἀνὰ θυμὸν ἃ οἱ πέρι δῶκεν Ἀθήνη,
ἔργα τ' ἐπίστασθαι περικαλλέα καὶ φρένας ἐσθλὰς
κέρδεά θ',

(The brains which Athene bestowed on her, and her knowledge of beautiful work and fine wits and wiles.)

Athene gives Odysseus useful gifts, the accoutrements of his disguise as an old beggar (13.437-438) [25]:

δῶκε δέ οἱ σκῆπτρον καὶ ἀεικέα πήρην,
πυκνὰ ῥωγαλέην: ἐν δὲ στρόφος ἦεν ἀορτήρ.

(She gave him a staff and an old knapsack, full of holes; and on it was a shoulder-strap.)

Many gifts were given to the gods. This type of giving will be examined in the next chapter.

The metaphorical use of giving occurs often enough to be worthy of mention: the 'gift of sleep' is found more than once in the Odyssey [26]. Hunger 'gives many evils to men' (17.287 and 17.474). There are many other examples where the verb 'to give' is used.

The attitude to begging has already been discussed. In the Odyssey, however, there are instances of requests for a gift that cannot be classed as begging. Some are almost orders to a man to give something to a third party. For example, Athene tells Nestor to give Telemachus a chariot and horses (3.369):

πέμφον σὺν δίφρῳ τε καὶ υἱέϊ: δὸς δέ οἱ ἵππους,

(Send him off with a chariot and one of your sons; give him horses.)

The gift which one requests is not always a material one. Formal supplication for food and clothing occurs often in the Odyssey: it will be discussed in the next chapter. There are occasions, however, when a man is supplicating someone for the gift of his life. For example, the suitors offer Odysseus gold and bronze if he will spare their lives (22.54-59). Leodes the priest also supplicates Odysseus for his life (22.312):

γουνοῦμαί σ', Ὀδυσεῦ: σὺ δέ μ' αἴδεο καὶ μ' ἐλέησον:

(I clasp you by the knees, Odysseus: have a care for me and pity me.)

Phemius the minstrel makes the same formal supplication (22.344).

A very important and often misunderstood class of gifts is that of wedding gifts, which we shall discuss in the next chapter.

There are some Homeric words which express types of gifts for which we do not have a specific English word. A frequent example is ξεινήϊον or ξειτιον (plural ξεινήϊα or ξείνια), meaning a gift of hospitality, which is usually given by the host to his guest on parting. In the following example the plural refers to hospitality in general rather than to a

specific gift (4.33) [27]:

ἡ μὲν δὴ νῶϊ ξεινήϊα πολλὰ φαγόντε

(Surely we too have eaten much hospitality.)

In another example, however, this word refers to specific gifts of hospitality which are enumerated (24.273-279) [28]:

καί οἱ δῶρα πόρον ξεινήϊα, οἷα ἔφκει.
χρυσοῦ μέν οἱ δῶκ' εὐεργέος ἑπτὰ τάλαντα,
δῶκα δέ οἱ κρητῆρα πανάργυρον ἀνθεμόεντα,
δώδεκα δ' ἁπλοΐδας χλαίνας, τόσσους δὲ τάπητας,
τόσσα δὲ φάρεα καλά, τόσους δ' ἐπὶ τοῖσι χιτῶνας,
χωρὶς δ' αὖτε γυναῖκας ἀμύμονα ἔργα ἰδυίας
τέσσαρας εἰδαλίμας, ἃς ἤθελεν αὐτὸς ἑλέσθαι.

(And I offered him gifts of hospitality, such as is proper. I gave him seven talents of well-wrought gold, I gave him a solid silver mixing bowl decorated with flowers, and twelve single folded cloaks, as many rugs, and as many fine mantles, and as many tunics too, and in addition four lovely ladies, skilled in faultless work, whichever ones he wished to choose.)

Gifts of this type are morally obligatory, if one is to judge by the number of references to the correctness of offering gifts [29]. The singular forms <u>ξεινιον</u> and <u>ξεινήϊον</u> more often refer to a specific gift of hospitality. Such a gift plays an important part in the story of the Cyclops. Odysseus asks the Cyclops for a <u>ξείνιον</u> and in return the Cyclops tells him he will only offer one when Odysseus tells him his name. Odysseus says that his name is Nobody, and the Cyclops answers (9.369-370):

Οὖτιν ἐγὼ πύματον ἕδομαι μετὰ οἷς ἑτάροισι,

τοὺς δ' ἄλλους πρόσθεν: τὸ δέ τοι ξεινήϊον ἔσται.

(I shall eat Nobody last after his comrades, and eat the others first; that will be your gift of hospitality.)

The word is obviously used ironically in this example. In another one the sense is again ironic : Ctesippus, one of the suitors, tells Odysseus that he will give him a ξείνιον and he throws a cow's hoof at him. The irony is turned on him later, however, when the cowherd kills him and says (22.290-291):

τοῦτο τοι ἀντὶ ποδὸς ξεινήϊον, ὅν ποτ' ἔδωκας
ἀντιθέῳ Ὀδυσῆϊ δόμον κάτ' ἀλητεύοντι.

(This is the gift of hospitality in return for the hoof, which you formerly gave to godlike Odysseus, as he went about through the palace.)

Another word for gift appears in one passage with ξεινήϊον (9.267-268), and some differentiation seems to be made between them:

ἱκόμεθ', εἴ τι πόροις ξεινήϊον ἠὲ καὶ ἄλλως
δοίης δωτίνην, ἥ τε ξείνων θέμις ἐστίν.

(We have come to see if you might offer us a gift of hospitality, or even better, if you would give us a gift, which is the right of guests.)

Perhaps in this passage, ξεινήϊον means general hospitality whereas δωτίνην refers to a specific gift. In the only other place where δωτίνην is used, it refers to the series of gifts which Alcinous makes to Odysseus (11.351-352):

ἔμπης οὖν ἐπιμεῖναι ἐς αὔριον, εἰς ὅ κε πᾶσαν

δωτίνην τελέσω:
(At any rate to stay until tomorrow, until I complete the whole gift.)

Perhaps 'presentation' would be a good translation for this word.

The use of the word ἀμοιβή suggests it means something in exchange, a reciprocal gift. In one example it refers to a gift given in return for good treatment (3.58-59):

αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' ἄλλοισι δίδου χαρίεσσαν ἀμοιβὴν
σύμπασιν Πυλίοισιν ἀγακλειτῆς ἑκατόμβης.

(And then to all the rest in Pylos give a gracious reciprocal gift for their glorious hecatomb.)

In another example it refers to a compensatory gift (12.382):

εἰ δέ μοι οὐ τίσουσι βοῶν ἐπιεικέ' ἀμοιβήν,

(If they do not pay me fitting recompense for the cattle.)

And a further example gives ἀμοιβή the meaning of 'exchange', as in a direct gift-exchange (1.318):

καί μάλα καλὸν ἑλών: σοὶ δ' ἄξιον ἔσται ἀμοιβῆς.

(And choose a really fine one; it will be worth the exchange to you.)

ἀπριάτην is an interesting word we find in the Odyssey. For example, Odysseus says (14.316-317):

ἔνθα με Θεσπρωτῶν βασιλεὺς ἑκομίσσατο Φείδων
ἥρως ἀπριάτην:

(There Pheidon the hero, the king of the Thesprotians looked after me for nothing.)

The word literally means 'not bought'; since Odysseus has said that he was shipwrecked and washed up on the isle of Thesprotia, he could not exchange anything for hospitality, hence ἀπριάτην probably means 'with no exchange forthcoming'.

Some gifts are an obvious substitute for money. For example, an ἐπίβαθρον is a payment for a ferry trip. On the one occasion it is used in the Odyssey, the 'payment' is a small boy.

Another hapax in the Odyssey is ὁδοιπόριον, which means a reward given for completing a sea-mission: in this case the reward is a good meal (15.505-507).

The idea of a free gift with no counter-gift forthcoming is also contained in the word προίξ. The food which Odysseus, as a beggar, receives from the suitors is termed προικός (17.413). Also, Alcinous says that he will recover what wealth he gives to Odysseus by a public levy, because (13.15):

ἀργαλέον γὰρ ἕνα προικὸς χαρίσασθαι.

(For it is hard for one man to give freely of a free gift.)

In other words, it is hard for one man to make a sub-

stantial free gift to someone who is not in a position to make a counter-gift. The similarity with the word for a beggar, προίκτης, suggests that a προίξ was a gift given to beggars, who were people who could not make a return gift.

The word δόσις is used in the Odyssey as a general term for giving a gift. For example, Nausicaa tells Odysseus (6.207-208) [30]:

> πρὸς γὰρ Διός εἰσιν ἅπαντες
> ξεῖνοί τε πτωχοί τε, δόσις δ' ὀλίγη τε φίλη τε.
>
> (For all guests and beggars are in the hands of Zeus, and a gift is little and dear.)

The most common word of all in the Odyssey for 'gift' is δῶρον. This word is used at times when one would expect one of the specific words. For example, in 4.589, Menelaus says to Telemachus:

> καὶ τότε σ' εὖ πέμψω, δώσω δέ τοι ἀγλαὰ δῶρα
>
> (And then I shall send you off in fine style, and I shall give you lovely gifts.)

These are gifts of hospitality, and we would have expected them to be described as ξείνια. δῶρα often forms part of a metric formula that rounds off a hexameter: ἀγλαὰ δῶρα (fine gifts) [31], for example. This is probably why it is used so often. The following two examples show how δῶρον is used as the gen-

eral term for gift, but is contrasted with a specific term:

δῶρον δ' ὅττι κέ μοι δοίης, κειμήλιον ἔστω: (4.600)

(As for the gift, whatsoever you may give me, let it be a treasure.)

δώρων δ' ὅσσ' ἐν ἐμῷ οἴκῳ κειμήλια κεῖται, (4.613)

(From the gifts, such as are stored in my house.)

Two gift-related words found in the Odyssey have similar forms: ζωάγρια and μοιχάγρια. The former means 'payment for saving one's life', as in 8.462 [33]:

μνήσῃ ἐμεῖ', ὅτι μοι πρώτῃ ζωάγρι' ὀφέλλεις.

(Remember me, that you owe me first a payment for saving your life.)

μοιχάγρια means 'payment by an adulterer to his mistress' husband', as in 8.332:

τὸ καὶ μοιχάγρι' ὀφέλλει.

(And so he owes him an adulterer's payment.)

Both of these payments can be seen as counter-gifts: ζωάγρια in return for a good service, μοιχάγρια in compensation for a wrong action.

Finally there is the phrase δῶτηρες ἐάων (givers of good things), which occurs in the Odyssey as an epithet of the gods [34].

The conclusion we may draw from all these examples is that the variety and frequency of words

and phrases related to gift-giving in the Odyssey show that the gift plays an important role in Homeric society. In the following chapters we hope to show the extent of that role.

NOTES

1. M. Finley, The World of Odysseus, rev. ed. (New York, 1965).
2. Translated by Ian Cunnison as The Gift, (London, 1969).
3. R. Hope Simpson and J.F. Lazenby, The Catalogue of Ships in Homer's Iliad, (Oxford, 1970), p.7.
4. M. Finley, "The World Of Odysseus Revisited", Proceedings of the Classical Association 71, 1974, p.16.
5. The World of Odysseus, p.62.
6. Ibid.
7. Books 14 to 21 incl.
8. The translations in this thesis attempt to provide a literal but readable representation of the Greek, while making clear the distinction between the different meanings of gift-giving words.
9. cf. 19.282-286, where Odysseus is praised for collecting wealth by begging.
10. See also 17.578.
11. See Iliad 4.49 and 24.70.
12. See 8,158-165.
13. In 14.62-66.
14. See also 24.85ff.
15. In mythology, Eriphyle was bribed by Polyneices with the necklace of Harmonia to command her husband,

Amphiaraus, to fight at Thebes. He was killed in combat there.

16. The measure was usually a talent.
17. In mythology, Astyoche, mother of Eurypylus, was persuaded to let her son go to war by Priam, who bribed her with a golden vine.
18. This is the same legend referred to in 11.326-327.
19. For other examples see 4.613; 15.113; 14.326; 19.295; 15.159; 19.272.
20. For the Homeric meaning of ξεῖνος see H. Kakridis, La Notion de l'Amitié et de l'Hospitalité Chez Homère, (Thessaloniki, 1963), Chapter 4.
21. See also 9.550-551.
22 See 15.388; 15.429; 15.452; 20.383.
23. See also 16.384, where the suitors plan how to divide up the estate of Odysseus; also 17.80-81, where Telemachus makes contingency plans for his gifts should he be killed by the suitors.
24. See also 18.191; 19.396; 21.280; 17.148; 22.236; 23.140; 24.402.
25. For other objects given by the gods, see 24.73-74.
26. See 16.481; 19.427.
27. See also 5.91; 14.404; 19.185.
28. ξεινήϊα is strengthened by δῶρα and so it really retains its meaning of hospitality.
29. See for example 9.268; 8.389.

30. See also 4.651; 18.287.

31. See 4.589; 7.132; 9.201; 16.230; 19.413.

32. 15.113 is identical.

33. These are considered as gifts rather than payments in accordance with Malinowski's scale of gifts, which is described in The Argonauts of the Western Pacific, (New York, 1961), p.176-190.

34. See 8.325 and 8.335.

CHAPTER TWO

STUDIES IN THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL BACKGROUND TO GIFT-GIVING IN THE ODYSSEY

Part One: Mauss and the Gift

In this chapter, Homer's portrayal of the society of the Odyssey and their gift-giving customs will be compared in detail to Mauss' observations on the customs of ancient and primitive cultures. By quoting lines from the Odyssey and extracts from "The Gift", we hope to show the many similarities between the two.

Before we make a comparison item by item between the society of the Odyssey and those cultures studied by Mauss, it might be useful first to summarise the general picture of gift-giving which emerges from Mauss' work, in order to relate this as a whole to the Odyssey.

Mauss begins by saying that gifts are the means by which contracts and exchanges are fulfilled. Although they appear to be voluntary, they are given and repaid under obligation. It is an exposition of the reason for this obligation which chiefly concerns Mauss throughout his essay. He considers that "economic self-interest"(p.1) plays a large part in what he calls "prestation"(p.3). This term is used to express giving in a broader sense than the material: it

may be applied to services rendered, or a whole series of related acts of giving, usually from one group to another. Mauss confines his study to areas "where we have access to the minds of societies through documentation and philological research"(p.3).

Firstly, we learn that groups rather than individuals make gift-exchanges. Mauss, however, is talking about Polynesian society in particular, so this is not necessarily a general rule. The 'gift' itself does not signify goods alone, but can represent a multitude of things both abstract and concrete. Mauss calls these gift-exchanges "total prestations" (p.3); if the groups refuse to give or receive then "private or open warfare"(p.3) may result. The North American Indians indulge in a special type of prestation which Mauss terms the "potlatch"(p.4). These Indians compete with each other for position in the hierarchy of their tribe by making extravagant prestations (which may include mass destruction of goods). He who gives the most gains the most prestige in the tribe.

Mauss finds two elements involved in contractual gifts [1]:- prestige gained from receiving, and the obligation to make a return for the preservation of that prestige. He identifies two other oblig-

ations as well as that of repayment involved in total prestation:- to give and to receive. Mauss wishes to determine what power obligates the recipient to make repayment, and for an answer he turns to a discussion of the Polynesian hau, which he describes as the spirit of the thing given. It is in this area that Mauss has received the most criticism from other anthropologists. Sahlins [2] considers that he places so much emphasis on the hau as the "obligation to reciprocate" that he treats the obligations to give and to receive "only summarily" (p.150). Levi-Strauss feels that the hau is not the reason for the sense of obligation to reciprocate (p.154)

> "but only what one people happen to believe is the reason."

In other words, this obligation exists in all societies, but the hau is a spiritual concept of one society alone, the Polynesian. As for the obligations of giving and receiving, Mauss considers that they are maintained by the natural tendency for hospitality and good relations. Conversely the refusal to give is taken as a "declaration of war"(p.11). The fundamental principle of reciprocity, Mauss tells us, is a spiritual bond involving persons, groups and things. He concludes this section by saying (p.12):

> "Everything is stuff to be given away and repaid."

Next he deals with the part that the gods and nature [3] play in gift-giving, and treats sacrifice as a gift which expects repayment. From this Mauss proceeds to a discussion of the theory of alms. These concepts will be discussed in greater detail in the examination of the Odyssey, in the second section of this chapter.

In the second chapter of "Essai sur le Don" [4] Mauss describes many customs related to gift-giving and their distribution throughout the world. The Melanesian culture has numerous rituals related to gift-exchange. Mauss shows how in that society ownership is minimised. Everything is constantly circulated: it is given on the understanding that it will be passed on to someone else. The gifts themselves have a spiritual quality, and often a personality of their own. For the people of the Trobriand Islands

> "Social life is a constant give-and-take... in magnanimity, for repayment of services, or as challenges or pledges"(p.27)

Mauss goes on to mention Malinowski's theory that the services given to a woman by her husband in the form of looking after her welfare are gift-payments in return for the service of her body [5]. This section ends with Mauss' observation that the Trobrianders have a multitude of names for different types of gift.

A brief explanation follows of the "marriage by purchase"(p.30) which Mauss considers to be a misnomer; he prefers to think of it as a series of prestations from all parties and families involved in the marriage. His concluding remarks on the Melanesian world in general imply that its economic trade is totally controlled by a system of gifts and return gifts which the islanders use to "replace our system of sale and purchase"(p.30).

Mauss next turns to the Indian tribes of North West America, and he describes similar institutions to those of the Melanesians and Polynesians; he adds, however, that the gift exchange system of the Indians exists "in a more radical and accentuated form"(p.31). By this he means that these Indians practise the potlatch; we have already seen that this type of prestation has an atmosphere of competitiveness about it. A man has to return a gift with interest (ie., with something of greater value) so that he is no longer in debt, and by doing so he gains prestige.

A general review of Mauss' three obligations (to give, to receive and to reciprocate) now follows. Firstly, the obligation to give, which incorporates the obligation to invite, he describes as "the essence of potlatch"(p.37). Secondly, he says that the oblig-

ation to receive exists since to refuse a gift expresses a reluctance to offer a return gift:

> "Failure to give or receive, like failure to make return gifts, means a loss of dignity."(p.40)

Thirdly, Mauss says that "the obligation to repay is the essence of potlatch"(p.40). Hence both the initial act of giving and the subsequent repayment are both stimulated by a desire to gain prestige and position in one's society. With regard to American Indian tribes, one is liable to "enslavement for debt"(p.41) if a gift is not repaid. Mauss draws analogies with the Roman institution of nexum, a point which he expands in more detail in Chapter Three of his essay.

The gift itself has a power of its own which ensures its exchange, at least in Indian cultures. Perhaps a similarity may be drawn here with the Polynesian hau. Mauss describes how valuable articles are kept apart from the rest of the family property. Other societies also do this: Mauss cites the "Romans, Trobrianders and Samoans"(p.42). The articles of treasure have magical qualities which extend to the box which contains them. They are endowed with a mythological background.

At this point, Mauss reaches some preliminary conclusions: the potlatch is a relatively wide-

spread phenomenon, and a system of gift-exchange basic to their everyday existence is found in all the societies examined so far.

The next section of Mauss' work concerns survivals of the gift-system in early literature. His aim is to determine whether at one time real law and personal law existed separately, or

> "Did they [ancient societies] not themselves practise these customs of gift exchange in which persons and things become indistinguishable?"(p.46)

Mauss turns to the legal system of ancient Rome, paying particular attention to the nexum, which may be defined as a supplementary surety. This nexum formed part of a solemn ceremonial contract in which the article given, the res, played an essential part. Mauss analyses the linguistic background to the legal Latin terms mentioned in his work: res he takes to be derived from the Sanskrit "rah, ratih, meaning a gift or a pleasant thing"(p.49); reus he defines as "someone who is possessed by the thing"(p.50); and accordingly traditio, the "handing over", refers to the giving of the contractual gift. Hence he finds gift-related meanings to all three legal terms.

There follows a discussion of the emptio venditio, purchase and sale:

> "Just as in primitive custom we find the gift followed by the return gift, so in Roman usage there is sale and then pay ment"(p.51)

Mauss continues his linguistic analysis to show how many Latin formulae contain an element of dare, to give.

The Brahmin legal texts of ancient India provide an insight into the function of the gift in the Hindu classical period. Mauss mentions two groups of that era who show evidence of the potlatch. The Brahmin concept of gift is on a spiritual level:- a gift given brings reward in the next life. The role it plays is as important as in the societies of the Polynesians, Melanesians and American Indians examined previously[6].

Mauss then turns to ancient Germanic society, which had

> "A clearly developed system of exchange with gifts voluntarily and obligatorily given, received and repaid."(p.59)

He finds traces of the potlatch and gift-exchange in general far back in Germanic history. A highly organised system of wedding gifts is apparent in this society. A contractual pledge called wadium is compared to the Latin nexum. The gift seems to contain an element of danger for the recipient; Mauss draws att-

ention to the double meaning of gift, that is as gift and poison, in some Germanic and other languages.

As a final piece of evidence from ancient literature, Mauss cites the Chinese , who recognise "the indissoluble bond of a thing with its original owner"(p.62). An alliance which results from an exchenge is also binding.

The final chapter of Mauss' work is devoted to his conclusions about gift-giving and its effect on present day society: moral, political and economic, sociological and ethical. The system of gift-exchange, says Mauss, is merely a development from the earlier system of "total prestation", defined as

> "prestation between clan and clan in which individuals and groups exchange everything between them"(p.68)

In his economic conclusions, Mauss says that ancient societies were clearly aware of value: huge amounts could be gained or lost "without a trace of mercenariness"(p.70). The treasure exchanged was a substitute for money, but religious and ceremonial elements were still involved. Malinowski's classification of gifts [7] from pure gift (one which is given voluntarily and expects no return) to barter is criticised by Mauss in accordance with his theory

of obligation. The gift between husband and wife is a pure gift, in Malinowski's estimation. But Mauss considers this is merely payment for sexual services. Other so-called pure gifts Mauss traces back to some original obligation. His major conclusion is that gifts are neither "spontaneous" nor "disinterested"(p.71). Apart from their being given in return for services, Mauss believes that they are used to promote useful alliances. The items used as tokens of wealth in place of money form binding pledges. Yet since they are used as money, they are continually circulated in order to obtain something else of value, equal or greater. Further, the potlatch itself, even though it involves wholesale destruction of wealth, is not performed without a motive of self-interest. It is a means of attaining prestige and position in tribal hierarchy. One might conclude then that a gift is always a means to an end.

The ethical conclusion which Mauss reaches is that the gift (and the peaceful alliance it brings) is the object by which a society uses reason to combat the desire for war:- "In order to trade, man must first lay down his spear"(p.80). Sahlins[8] comments:

> "The gift is the primitive way of achieving the peace that in civil society is secured by the state"(p.169)

Mauss has been criticised for attempting to apply the hau, an aspect of Maori culture, to ancient societies as a whole. Also he is accused of dissecting gift-giving into three obligations which he analysed separately, instead of treating the phenomenon in toto. Sahlins, who extended Mauss' ideas on the subject, talks about four types of reciprocity:- negative, generalised, weak and balanced[9]. Negative reciprocity is the term he uses for damaging returns such as revenge, deception or theft; no good results from such a transaction. Generalised reciprocity is a synonym for Malinowski's "pure gift"; it is an act of generosity, often in the form of a service rather than a material gift. Weak reciprocity refers to tribute paid to a leader by his subjects:- weak because the return he gives is not specific; they are paying him for his general leadership. Balanced reciprocity is perhaps the most frequent type of exchange:- when a gift is given in return for one, immediately or soon afterwards.

We have seen the general pattern of gift-giving as Mauss has portrayed it, and some of the pertinent criticisms. The Odyssey will be surveyed to see if a similar pattern emerges.

Part Two: The Odyssey and the Anthropological Background to gift-giving

The theme of gifts figures largely throughout the Odyssey. The Phaeacian episode[10] in particular has the theme of gifts (to be given to Odysseus by King Alcinous and his people) constantly through it. The fact that Odysseus is to receive gifts is mentioned several times[11], and the gifts themselves are frequently described[12]. At times in the Odyssey the description of gifts appears to be inordinately long to the modern reader, who may consider that such details are not important to the story. An example is the episode in which Telemachus is offered hospitality by Menelaus. Lines 587 to 619 of Book Four are totally concerned with a discussion of what gifts Telemachus is to take home with him. There are times, however, when a gift is essential to the plot, for example the 'folk tale' gifts which Odysseus receives to help him on his journey. These all have a magical quality: the bag of winds[13], and Ino's wrap[14]. Most important, the bow of Odysseus, which brings about the climax of the story, is described as a gift. Thirty lines are devoted (Book 21.11-41) to the circumstances in which Odysseus received it. It was mentioned previously how the modern ear might react to such descriptions;

yet their frequency in the Odyssey implies that a contemporary audience expected to hear many details about gifts in the story. If gift-giving was important to their economic and social life, frequent descriptions of exchanges would not be unacceptable.

We have seen that Mauss is mainly concerned with the three obligations he finds intrinsic in gift-giving. He maintains that these continue to interact while gifts are being circulated because of a general wish to promote peace rather than war. By this reasoning, therefore, hospitality offered by a ruler to a suppliant stranger amounts to a declaration of alliance with this man. If the stranger happens to be chief of his people, and he receives and exchanges (when he is in a position to do so) gifts of hospitality with the leader to whom he is a suppliant, then the two men are making a formal contract of friendship on behalf of their subjects. The Phaeacian episode is an example of this principle. The immediate aim of Odysseus is to be helped on his journey home; Alcinous has a long-range motive for offering hospitality: the promotion of friendship. Odysseus knows he must offer the king a worthy return. When the occasion arises he will do so, either in the form of goods or of service. It may be concluded that this

sense of obligation is fundamental to the morality of the Homeric society.

Odysseus has arrived at the kingdom of the Phaeacians(Book 6), totally bereft of any belongings, in tattered clothing, battered by the waves. Thus he supplicates someone for help (as every Homeric Greek has the right to do); in this case he is the suppliant of the princess Nausicaa and subsequently her parents on the level of a beggar to a king. Of course, as he is of royalty himself, Odysseus should by rights be on equal footing with them. In his present condition as a suppliant, he can expect, by the moral rules of hospitality, to be fed, bathed, clothed and escorted home. Nausicaa tells him (6.192-193):

> οὔτ' οὖν ἐσθῆτος δευήσεαι οὔτε τευ ἄλλου,
> ὧν ἐπέοιχ' ἱκέτην ταλαπείριον ἀντιάσαντα.
>
> (Accordingly you shall lack neither clothing nor anything else which is the right of a much enduring suppliant who has happened along.)

Alcinous realises that Odysseus is of noble birth, the opportunity for making a formal pact of friendship is offered, and he organises a 'prestation' of several gifts. He tells his princes (8.389):

> ἀλλ' ἄγε οἱ δῶμεν ξεινήϊον, ὡς ἐπιεικές.
>
> (But come let us give him a gift of hospitality, as is proper.)

Once the idea of giving gifts to Odysseus has been

introduced, it expands in importance more and more as the Phaeacians talk with him and hear his story. Alcinous gives instructions to his princes of what they are to donate (8.392-393):

τῶν οἱ ἕκαστος φᾶρος ἐϋπλυνὲς ἠδὲ χιτῶνα
καὶ χρυσοῖο τάλαντον ἐνείατε τιμήεντος.

(Each of you bring him a well-washed mantle and a tunic and a talent of precious gold.)

Odysseus is also to receive a bronze sword by way of amends from Euryalus (8.403) who insulted him during the games (8.158-164). This gift is described in some detail, as most others are throughout the Odyssey (8.403-405):

δώσω οἱ τόδ' ἄορ παγχάλκεον, ᾧ ἔπι κώπη
ἀργυρέη, κολεὸν δὲ νεοπρίστου ἐλέφαντος
ἀμφιδεδίνηται: πολέος δέ οἱ ἄξιον ἔσται.

(I shall give him this solid bronze sword, which has a hilt of silver on it, and a sheath of fresh ivory encloses it, and it will be of much value to him.)

This is just one of the examples of a gift being described in terms of its beauty and its value. Details of a gift's worth must have appealed to the Homeric Greeks. Euryalus accompanies his gift with a token speech of friendship (8.408-411). In reply Odysseus makes a formal speech of blessing (8.413):

καὶ σύ, φίλος, μάλα χαῖρε, θεοὶ δέ τοι ὄλβια δοῖεν,

(And greetings to you, friend, and may the gods give you blessings.)

The use of δίδωμι in this blessing suggests that Od-

ysseus hopes that the gods will 'give' gifts to Euryalus in return for the gifts he received from him, as he is in no position to make the return at that moment. The abstract nature of divine generosity in the form of good fortune is reminiscent of Mauss' use of the word 'prestation' to cover both concrete and abstract senses.

Once the gifts have been assembled, Alcinous asks his wife to fetch the finest chest to store them (8.424). This chest has as much importance in the ceremonial act of giving as the gifts it contains. Mauss discovered that some tribes of North American Indians store their precious goods in a

> "large ornate box which itself is endowed with a powerful personality, which speaks, is in communion with the owner, contains his soul, and so on".(p.42)

Although the treasure chest of Alcinous does not have its own personality, it does have a certain magical quality: Odysseus fastens the lid with a complicated knot he learnt from the goddess Circe (8.447-448).

Alcinous and Arete themselves have given Odysseus personal gifts, tokens of the friendship established between them. Arete gives him a well-washed mantle and tunic (8.425) while Alcinous provides a golden chalice as a souvenir of himself (8.430-432):

καί οἱ ἐγὼ τόδ' ἄλεισον ἐμὸν περικαλλὲς ὀπάσσω,
χρύσεον, ὄφρ' ἐμέθεν μεμνημένος ἤματα πάντα
σπένδῃ ἐνὶ μεγάρῳ Διί τ' ἄλλοισίν τε θεοῖσιν.

(And I shall bestow on him this beautiful golden chalice of mine, that he may remember me all his days when he makes a libation in his palace to Zeus and the other gods.)

Later, after Odysseus has finished the tale of his adventures and the Phaeacians fully realise the importance of their guest, Alcinous suggests to his princes that further gifts be added, a tripod and a cauldron from each man (13.13-14):

ἀλλ' ἄγε οἱ δῶμεν πρίποδα μέγαν ἠδὲ λέβητα
ἀνδρακάς:

(But come let us give him a large tripod and a cauldron from each man.)

Thus Odysseus becomes even more firmly established as guest-friend of the Phaeacians. However this further act of generosity is qualified by a statement somewhat mercenary to our ears (13.14-15):

ἡμεῖς δ' αὖτε ἀγειρόμενοι κατὰ δῆμον
τισόμεθ': ἀργαλέον γὰρ ἕνα προικὸς χαρίσασθαι.

(We in turn will get recompense by collecting from the people: for it would be hard for one man to give freely of a free gift.)

The concept of giving gifts does not appear to be separated from economic reason. For the society of the Odyssey, a public reference to the cost of gifts in front of the recipient is not considered to be in bad taste; apparently it was felt to be proper to recoup

one's losses elsewhere if no return payment was forthcoming from the recipient. If Odysseus had made a generous offering in exchange no doubt he too might have resorted to a public levy from his subjects. Indeed after he has returned home and killed all the suitors, he tells Penelope that the livestock he has lost must be replaced by his subjects (23.357-358):

> πολλὰ μὲν αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ληΐσσομαι, ἄλλα δ' Ἀχαιοὶ
> δώσουσ', εἰς ὅ κε πάντας ἐνιπλήσωσιν ἐπαύλους.
>
> (I myself shall raid a lot, but the Achaeans shall give the rest, till they fill all my pens.)

One of the suitors, Eurymachus, even offers a public levy to Odysseus to make amends to him for what they have wasted of his property (22.55-59):

> ἀτὰρ ἄμμες ὄπισθεν ἀρεσσάμενοι κατὰ δῆμον,
> ὅσσα τοι ἐκπέποται καὶ ἐδήδοται ἐν μεγάροισι,
> τιμὴν ἀμφὶς ἄγοντες ἑεικοσάβοιον ἕκαστος.
> χαλκόν τε χρυσόν τ' ἀποδώσομεν, εἰς ὅ κε σὸν κῆρ
> ἰανθῇ: πρὶν δ' οὔ τι νεμεσσητὸν κεχολῶσθαι.
>
> (And hereafter we shall make amends from the people, for whatever has been eaten and drunk in your palace, each man bringing the approximate worth of twenty oxen. And we shall pay you back in bronze and gold, until your heart is warmed: until then your anger is in no way reprehensible.)

The public levy appears to have been a standard procedure. Since the king receives (from his subjects) replacement goods for those he has either lost or given away, a form of exchange takes place. In the case of Alcinous' gifts to Odysseus, each Phaeacian citizen is indirectly involved in the giving of the

gifts. Hence the alliance formed by the two kings extends to their peoples too. One is strongly reminded of Mauss' observation about the Polynesians (p.3):

> " it is groups , and not individuals, which carry on exchange, make contracts, and are bound by obligations; the persons represented in the contracts are moral persons- clans, tribes, and families; the groups, or the chiefs as intermediaries for the groups, confront and oppose each each other."

The formality of the gift-contract of friendship is carried further in the Odyssey. For it is Alcinous himself who boards the ship which is to take Odysseus home, and he personally stows away the gifts (13.20-22), just as Odysseus himself sealed the chest (8.447-448).

During his narrative, Odysseus breaks off (11.333-384) to make sure he is to receive a safe passage home and also valuable gifts from the Phaeacians. In the society of the Odyssey it is not considered rude to ask for gifts. A member of a royal family travelling to foreign countries would expect to receive hospitality as well as gifts of friendship. Menelaus suggests that he should accompany Telemachus on a tour through Greece (15.82-85):

οὐδέ τις ἡμέας
αὖτως ἀπέμψει, δώσει δέ τι ἔν γε φέρεσθαι,
ἠέ τινα τριπόδων εὐχάλκων ἠὲ λεβήτων,
ἠὲ δύ' ἡμιόνους ἠὲ χρύσειον ἄλεισον.

(And no one will simply send us away,
they will give at least one thing to carry,
either some bronze tripod or a cauldron,
or a pair of mules or a golden chelice.)

Likewise the royal traveller (Menelaus, for example), when in his own country, would treat foreigners with the same hospitality that he expects from others. This is a method of gaining prestige among one's own people. As Odysseus tells Alcinous (11.356-361):

εἴ με καὶ εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν ἀνώγοιτ' αὐτόθι μίμνειν,
πομπήν τ' ὀτρύνοιτε καὶ ἀγλαὰ δῶρα διδοῖτε,
καί κε τὸ βουλοίμην, καί κεν πολὺ κέρδιον εἴη,
πλειοτέρη σὺν χειρὶ φίλην ἐς πατρίδ' ἱκέσθαι:
καί κ' αἰδοιότερος καὶ φίλτερος ἀνδράσιν εἴην
πᾶσιν, ὅσοι μ''Ιθάκηνδε ἱδοίατο νοστήσαντα.

(If you pressed me to stay here even a year,
and arranged my escort and gave me lovely
gifts, I would even wish this; and it would
be much better for me to return to my father-
land with fuller hands: and I would be more
respected and dearer to all men, who saw me
after I returned to Ithaca.)

Even though he is anxious to be home, Odysseus is quite willing to stay the night to give the Phaeacians time to prepare their δωτίνην. The gifts come as no surprise. The recipient does not consider the act as spontaneous generosity. The gifts are an expected part of hospitality. Paradoxically, although Odysseus suffers greatly over the long years of his journey home, he arrives back in Ithaca with much more wealth than he would have if he had returned directly from Troy. This paradox adds further emphasis to the role of gifts in the story. And yet once Odysseus reaches

Ithaca the gifts are forgotten, hidden in their cave by Athena (13.366-371). Earlier the action of Athena is claimed to be the reason for the Phaeacians' generosity (13.120-121).Hence the story of these gifts contains a divine element: Athena's help. One is thus reminded of Mauss' comment that many primitive societies invent a mythology about their gifts.

After Odysseus sees how much of his household wealth has been consumed by the suitors, he decides on a public levy to replenish his assets. He gives no thought to the gifts of the Phaeacians, except for a mention of them to Penelope (23.340-341). This apparent oversight is easily explained if one considers that the importance of the gifts lies in the contract of friendship they represent, rather than in their intrinsic worth. Moreover, such gifts would not be used to replenish livestock; they would become part of the king's store of treasure, perhaps to be used in another gift-exchange on a suitable occasion.

Meanwhile Odysseus sees nothing wrong in raiding other herds to rebuild his own, apparently pursuing the concept of 'an eye for an eye'. This is basically the same idea as 'a gift in return for a gift', and fits Sahlins' definition of negative reciprocity [15]. The similarity becomes clearer if one

remembers the evil connotations of the word 'gift' in Germanic languages. On this occasion blind fury takes over from reason, and an economic return is not enough for Odysseus:- he wants murderous revenge.

The community is expected to help provide the necessary goods for hospitality if the host has not adequate funds. Odysseus, in the guise of a Cretan prince, tells Penelope how he entertained her husband's comrades (19.197):

> δημόθεν ἄλφιτα δῶκα καὶ αἴθοπα οἶνον ἀγείρας
>
> (I gave him barley-meal and sparkling wine which I gathered from the people.)

Hospitality among primitive societies comes under Mauss' heading of "the obligation to give". His reason for it is basically the promotion of good relations. Hence if the guest is important enough, the whole community must contribute to prevent loss of face by their leader, and to create a good impression with their visitor. This community involvement applies to the Odyssey as much as to Mauss' examples. Alcinous explains his hospitality to Odysseus (8.546-547):

> ἀντὶ κασιγνήτου ξεῖνός θ' ἱκέτης τε τέτυκται
> ἀνέρι, ὅς τ' ὀλίγον περ ἐπιφαύῃ πραπίδεσσι.
>
> (A guest-friend and a suppliant is as good as a brother to a man who uses his reason even only a little.)

To treat a stranger as a brother is to include him in

the clan. Hence on anthropological terms, gifts increase the extent of the clan and thereby its power and importance. Similarly Odysseus, by means of hospitality, becomes a lasting ally of the Phaeacians by a bond of friendship that cannot be broken. Should the opportunity arise to repay them with a service or with gifts, Odysseus would be morally bound to do it. In a discussion of the Polynesian hau Mauss says (p.9):

> "The obligation attached to a gift itself is not inert. Even when abandoned by the giver, it still forms part of him. Through it he has hold over the recipient, just as he had, while its owner, a hold over anyone who stole it".

The example is specific but the general principle can be applied to the Odyssey:- Odysseus is obliged to Alcinous having received his hospitality. Similarly he is morally right to exact a penalty from the suitors who wasted his possessions without his consent.

Mauss also says (p.10):

> "It is clear that in Maori custom this bond created by things is in fact a bond between persons, since the thing itself is a person or pertains to a person. Hence it follows that to give something is to give a part of oneself".

Gifts of treasure mentioned in the Odyssey are frequently described in terms of their 'genealogy'. The donor of a particular gift always remains associated with the gift itself. And so when the gift is

passed on to someone else the new recipient is always informed of its previous history. It seems that the value of a gift is related to the men who have owned it. Hence the more important the owners, the more prestige is attached to the giving and receiving of the gift. Frequently in the Odyssey a god is included in the 'genealogy', presumably to add a mythological quality and an unimpeachable prestige. The gifts of hospitality which Menelaus gives to Telemachus are described in these terms (15.115-119):

δώσω τοι κρητῆρα τετυγμένον: ἀργύρεος δὲ
ἐστὶν ἅπας, χρυσῷ δ'ἐπὶ χείλεα κεκράανται,
ἔργον δ''Ηφαίστοιο: πόρεν δέ ἑ Φαίδιμος ἥρως,
Σιδονίων βασιλεύς, ὅθ' ἐὸς δόμος ἀμφεκάλυψε
κεῖσ' ἐμὲ νοστήσαντα: τεῖν δ' ἐθέλω τόδ' ὀπάσσαι.

(I shall give you a well-wrought mixing bowl: it is pure silver with a rim of gold worked round it, the work of Hephaestus: Phaidimus the hero, King of the Sidonians, gave it to me when his house sheltered me on my way back here: and I wish to give this to you.)

The physical description of the gift is formulaic, since it recurs in other contexts in the Odyssey [16], but its history is not. The phrase <u>ἔργον δ'Ἡφαίστοιο</u> does occur elsewhere [17] but not in connection with this gift. In the following example more than one god is mentioned in the history (24.73-75):

δῶκε δὲ μήτηρ
χρύσεον ἀμφιφορῆα: Διωνύσοιο δὲ δῶρον
φάσκ' ἔμεναι, ἔργον δὲ περικλυτοῦ Ἡφαίστοιο.

(Your mother gave a golden wine-jar: she said

> that it was a gift from Dionysus, and
> the work of the renowned Hephaestus.)

The goddess Thetis is the 'mother' mentioned. Admittedly this is a special case, since it is set in the mythological background of Hades rather than everyday society.

Thus a chain of gift-giving is established, each transaction forming another link as well as adding value to the original gift. To quote Malinowski [18]:

> "Most if not all economic acts are found
> to belong to some chain of reciprocal
> gifts and counter gifts".

Although the reason for the reciprocity of gifts in the Odyssey appears to be related to friendship rather than the economy, this is still in line with anthropological views. Sahlins [2] says (p.186):

> "The material flow [gifts] underwrites or
> initiates social relations [friends]."

Gift histories are not unique to Homer:- Mauss discusses vaygu'a, which are shell armbands and necklaces used as a sort of currency by the Trobriand people (p.21ff):

> "Normally they are hoarded and kept for
> the joy of living...the trading of these
> objects of prestige form, along with other
> more common and vulgar pursuits, the source
> of Trobriand wealth."(p.21)

The shells therefore have a similar role in Trobriand society as 'treasure' has in the Odyssey. They have

histories too:

> "Vaygu'a are not indifferent things; they are more than mere coins. All of them, at least the most valuable and most coveted, have a name, a personality, a past, and even a legend attached to them, to such an extent that people may be named after the them." [19]

There is another interesting example of gift-history in Book Four of the Odyssey concerning Helen and Menelaus (4.125-132):

> Φυλὼ δ' ἀργύρεον τάλαρον φέρε, τόν οἱ ἔδωκεν
> Ἀλκάνδρη, Πολύβοιο δάμαρ, ὅς ἔναι' ἐνὶ Θήβῃς
> Αἰγυπτίῃς, ὅθι πλεῖστα δόμοις ἐν κτήματα κεῖται:
> ὅς Μενελάῳ δῶκε δύ' ἀργυρέας ἀσαμίνθους,
> δοιοὺς δὲ τρίποδας, δέκα δὲ χρυσοῖο τάλαντα.
> χωρὶς δ' αὖ Ἑλένῃ ἄλοχος πόρε κάλλιμα δῶρα:
> χρυσέην τ' ἠλακάτην τάλαρόν θ' ὑπόκυκλον ὄπασσεν
> ἀργύρεον, χρυσῷ δ' ἐπὶ χείλεα κεκράαντο.
>
> (Phylo carried her silver work-basket, which was given to her by Alcandre, the wife of Polybus, who lived in Thebes in Egypt, where very many possessions lie in the houses: he gave to Menelaus two silver bathtubs, and two tripods, and ten talents of gold. Besides, in her turn, his wife gave Helen beautiful gifts: she gave her a golden spindle and a silver work-basket on wheels, and it had a rim of gold around it.)

Gold and silver gifts are by far the most popular gifts exchanged between people of royal rank. This particular example is the only one in the Odyssey which describes gifts of hospitality given to a woman. Later in the Odyssey (18.292-303) there is a description of the many gifts Penelope receives from the suitors, but these are specifically gifts of wooing. This

distinction will be clarified later in the chapter. It is apparent from this passage that an object and its history are inseparable. Homer is not describing these gifts in terms of value and history for any other reason than that the audience expects to hear these details. The description of gifts in these terms is used to conjure up a picture of the prestige and sumptuous wealth which Menelaus and Helen enjoyed.

Gift histories are not solely related to gifts of hospitality. Other services may be involved, just as they are in Mauss' primitive societies. Odysseus tells the Phaeacians at some length of gifts he received for protecting Maron, the priest of Apollo (9.196-205):

> ἀτὰρ αἴγεον ἀσκὸν ἔχον μέλανος οἴνοιο,
> ἡδέος, ὅν μοι δῶκε Μάρων, Εὐάνθεος υἱός,
> ἱρεὺς Ἀπόλλωνος, ὃς Ἴσμαρον ἀμφιβεβήκει,
> οὕνεκά μιν σὺν παιδὶ περισχόμεθ' ἠδὲ γυναικὶ
> ἁζόμενοι: ᾤκει γὰρ ἐν ἄλσεϊ δενδρήεντι
> Φοίβου Ἀπόλλωνος. ὁ δέ μοι πόρεν ἀγλαὰ δῶρα:
> χρυσοῦ μέν μοι δῶκ' εὐεργέος ἑπτὰ τάλαντα,
> δῶκε δέ μοι κρητῆρα πανάργυρον, αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα
> οἶνον ἐν ἀμφιφορεῦσι δυώδεκα πᾶσιν ἀφύσσας
> ἡδὺν ἀκηράσιον, θεῖον ποτόν:
>
> (But I had a goatskin bottle of dark sweet wine, which was given to me by Maron, the son of Euanthes, the priest of Apollo, who watched over Ismarus, because we protected him and his wife and daughter with respect: for he lived in a wooded grove of Phoebus Apollo. He gave me lovely gifts: he gave me seven talents of well-wrought gold, and he gave me a solid silver mixing bowl, and then he drew off all of twelve jars of sweet unmixed wine, a heavenly drink.)

On the whole the same type of gifts tend to be given:- gold, silver and bronze objects including armour and jewellery; fine cloth and clothing, and, less often, wine, drugs and olive oil. Other items mentioned once or so as gifts are mules (15.85), a staff (17.199), trinkets (15.416) [20] and fruit trees (24.340-342).

A very extensive gift-history occurs in 21.13-42, which describes the deadly bow and arrows of Odysseus. This passage illustrates many of the traits of gift-giving found in the Odyssey, and it is consistent with its role in primitive societies:

> τὰς ἑρέων Ὀδυσῆϊ συνήντετο, δῶκε δὲ τόξον,
> τὸ πρὶν μέν ῥ' ἐφόρει μέγας Εὔρυτος, αὐτὰρ ὁ παιδὶ
> κάλλιπ' ἀποθνήσκων ἐν δώμασιν ὑφηλοῖσι.(21.31-33)
>
> (Looking for these he met Odysseus, and he gave him the bow, which formerly the great Eurytus had carried, but had left to his son when he was dying in the high palace.)

These lines imply that it is customary in the society of the Odyssey for two strangers to exchange gifts when they meet away from home. Secondly, the origin of the gift, which Iphitus inherited from his father, is mentioned. This detail adds to the gift's value for Odysseus. The passage continues (21.34-35):

> τῷ δ' Ὀδυσεὺς ξίφος ὀξὺ καὶ ἄλκιμον ἔγχος ἔδωκεν,
> ἀρχὴν ξεινοσύνης προσκηδέος:
>
> (And Odysseus gave him a sharp sword and a mighty spear, the start of an affectionate guest-friendship.)

Here we see that what took place between the two men was gift-exchange for the purpose of promoting friendship. The anthropological view of reciprocity considers this motive a major one. These Odyssean characters are actively establishing peaceful relations by the same method as the primitive societies which Mauss surveys. We are reminded of his comments about the Trobrianders (p.27):

> "The system of gift-exchange pervades the whole economic life of the Trobriands. Social life is a constant give-and-take: gifts are rendered, received and repaid both obligatorily and in one's own interest, in magnanimity, for repayment of services, or as challenges or pledges."

The passage in the Odyssey continues (21.35-38):

> οὐδὲ τραπέζῃ
> γνώτην ἀλλήλων: πρὶν γὰρ Διὸς υἱὸς ἔπεφνεν
> Ἶφιτον Εὐρυτίδην, ἐπιείκελον ἀθανάτοισιν,
> ὅς οἱ τόξον ἔδωκε.
>
> (But they did not get to know each other at table: for before then the son of Zeus killed Iphitus, son of Eurytus, a man like the immortals, who gave him [Odysseus] the bow.)

The logical step after formally declaring friendship with an exchange of gifts is to invite each other to hospitality in their homes in the future. An invitation to share one's food is a traditional act of friendship in any society, and is to be included as a gift from one person to another. The acceptance and reciprocation of hospitality strengthens the bonds of

friendship originally created by material gifts.

This whole passage illustrates quite consistently the obligation of gift-exchange (ie., to return generosity with generosity) which Mauss analysed (p.31):

> " The obligation is expressed in myth and imagery, symbolically and collectively; it takes the form of interest in the objects exchanged; the objects are never completely separated from the men who exchange them; the communion and alliance which they establish are well-nigh indissoluble. The lasting influence of the objects exchanged is a direct expression of the manner in which sub-groups within segmentary societies of an archaic type are constantly embroiled with and feel themselves in debt to each other."

The 'myth and imagery' can be seen in the descriptions of the gifts and the stories which surround them. The gifts are often made or passed on by gods, or they are imbued with magical powers, such as Aeolus' leather bag of winds [21] and Hermes' antidote to Circe's magic drug [22]. The 'interest in the objects exchanged' is self-evident. Odysseus would love to have the deadly bow of Iphitus, whose very name implies strength.Moreover the interest extends to the audience and Homer himself, if one may judge by the number of lines devoted to the description of gifts. The two participants in the transaction each receive something they value, as did Iphitus and Odysseus. Since the origin of the objects is almost always described in terms of

the people who transmitted them, the gifts are therefore identified with these people; hence they are 'never completely separated from the men who exchange them'. Odysseus might say to A, when giving him a gift, "B gave this gift to me, and he received it from C". Then A would say, when passing it on to someone else, "Odysseus gave this gift to me. He received it from B, who was given it by C". Hence the links of the chain of gift-exchange are added, and the history and subsequent value of the gift is increased.

By the laws of Homeric hospitality, a guest-friend is safe from harm when under the roof of his host, who owes him protection. When Theoclymenus seeks sanctuary from Telemachus, he is promised the customary hospitality even though he admits that he has killed a man of his own blood. Telemachus tells one of his comrades (15.542-543):

> καὶ νῦν μοι τὸν ξεῖνον ἄγων ἐν δώμασι σοῖσιν
> ἐνδυκέως φιλέειν καὶ τιέμεν, εἰς ὅ κεν ἔλθω.
>
> (And now take the stranger for me and unstintingly care for him and respect him in your home, until I come.)

Hence the alliance between host and guest is so strong as to be 'well-nigh indissoluble'[23]: any guest who tries to injure another guest would find the vengeance of the host and his followers upon him. Telemachus repeatedly rebukes the suitors for their treatment of

the 'beggar' Odysseus. Indeed an important reason for the murderous revenge Odysseus wreaks on the suitors is their abuse of his family's hospitality. Not only did they use up his stock with no deference to Penelope and Telemachus (indeed they plotted to murder him, their host), but they maltreated a stranger (Odysseus in disguise) under another man's roof. Thus their actions were a gross breach of the laws of hospitality.

As the chain of gift-exchanges becomes more and more complex so the Homeric characters are enmeshed tighter and tighter in a web of giving and receiving material gifts, paying and claiming dues, offering and accepting hospitality; the friendships and alliances they create are the lasting results of the original gift or service. Hence the members of the Homeric society are 'constantly embroiled with and feel themselves in debt to each other'.[24]

There are further similarities between the hospitality of the primitive tribes that Mauss examined and of Homeric society. When the donor gives a series of gifts to a guest-friend of some importance, as Menelaus did to Telemachus, the donor wishes the recipient to realise the value of what he is to be given (as a sign of the value he places on the

friendship), and therefore to remember his host and his generosity. Primitive societies indulge in this type of hospitality too. Mauss also mentions a Melanesian custom (p.25):

> "They [the gifts] are laid out before being presented."

In the Odyssey gifts are enumerated, described and brought forth before being formally handed over.

The economic approach to gift-giving is apparent both in primitive and Homeric society. We have seen that it is not a breach of etiquette to state the value of a gift. Further it is not considered wrong to say what sort of gift one wants to receive. Telemachus tells Menelaus (4.600-602):

> δῶρον δ' ὅττι κέ μοι δοίης, κειμήλιον ἔστω:
> ἵππους δ' εἰς Ἰθάκην οὐκ ἄξομαι, ἀλλὰ σοὶ αὐτῷ
> ἐνθάδε λείψω ἄγαλμα:
>
> (As for the gift, whatsoever you would give me, let it be a treasure; I will not take horses to Ithaca, but I shall leave them here as a credit to yourself.)

Yet Telemachus' tone is not rude; he neatly turns his request to compliment Menelaus on the quality of his horses. And so in return he receives his κειμήλιον in the form of a solid silver mixing bowl, a gift we have seen more than once in the Odyssey as a token of other acts of giving.

When reading Mauss one receives the impression

that gift-giving is totally bound up with ritual. This ritualism also applies to the Odyssey, as in the formal 'prestation' of Alcinous, for example. There are, however, other ritualistic themes in the Odyssey related to gift-giving. A suppliant, as we have seen, has a right to a bath, fresh clothes, and food; the act of supplication itself is defined within a set behaviour pattern. The suppliant sits at the hearth until asked to come to the table (cf.7.153-154). He clasps his host by the knees (7.142) or hand, or touches his face. It is not until he has received food and clothing that the suppliant is asked questions about himself. The giving and acceptance of food establishes an allegiance between host and guest. Prestige is is involved; the generous host receives respect among his people and the strangers who visit him. The guest earns respect because he is well-treated by the usually wealthy host. Gould links prestige with supplication [25]:

> "A prime interest of hiketeia is that it displays a particular instance of the ritualisation of reciprocity around a value (prestige) of universally accepted significance in the society of ancient Greece."

Prestige, of course, extends into all forms of gift-giving, whether the gifts are abstract or concrete. The giver gains prestige as soon as he offers

something. This puts the recipient in danger of losing face if he does not make an adequate return. If he makes a very generous offer in return, then he will add to his own prestige. Mauss refers to the Kwakiutl Indians in this context, describing their system of potlatch:

> "No less important is the role which honour plays in the transactions of the Indians. Nowhere else is the prestige of an individual as closely bound up with expenditure, and with the duty of returning with interest gifts received in such a way that the creditor becomes the debtor."(p.35)

The same sense of honour is apparent in the Odyssey. There is even an example where a return gift is not made, and yet it is assumed that had the opportunity arisen, there certainly would have been a reciprocal gift. Odysseus visits his father, Laertes, in the guise of a stranger who once gave gifts to Odysseus as his host. Laertes hears his story and tells him (24.283-286):

> δῶρα δ' ἐτώσια ταῦτα χαρίζεο, μυρί' ὀπάζων:
> εἰ γάρ μιν ζωὸν γ' ἐνίχεις Ἰθάκης ἐνὶ δήμῳ,
> τῷ κέν σ' εὖ δώροισιν ἀμειψάμενος ἀπέπεμφε
> καὶ ξενίῃ ἀγαθῇ: ἡ γὰρ θέμις, ὅς τις ὑπάρξῃ.
>
> (These gifts you gave in quantity and gave freely, you gave in vain: for if you had found him alive in the district of Ithaca, he would have sent you off having made you a good return and with fine hospitality: for this is the rule, whoever is the initiator."

Adequate return for previously received gifts is the custom. Athene tells Telemachus, when offered a gift

by him (1.316-318):

> δῶρον δ' ὅττι κέ μοι δοῦναι φίλον ἦτορ ἀνώγῃ,
> αὖτις ἀνερχομένῳ δόμεναι οἰκόνδε φέρεσθαι,
> καὶ μάλα καλὸν ἑλών: σοὶ δ' ἄξιον ἔσται ἀμοιβῆς.
>
> (And the gift, whatever your dear heart presses you to give me, give it to me to carry home when I am on my way back again, and choose an especially fine one: it will be worth the exchange for you.)

That the Homeric Greeks set great store by fair exchange is best expressed in an example from the Iliad (6.234-236):

> ἔνθ' αὖτε Γλαύκῳ Κρονίδης φρένας ἐξέλετο Ζεύς,
> ὃς πρὸς Τυδεΐδην Διομήδεα τεύχε' ἄμειβε
> χρύσεα χαλκείων, ἑκατόμβοι' ἐννεαβοίων.
>
> (And then Zeus, the son of Cronos, took Glaucus' wits from him, for he offered golden arms to Diomedes, son of Tydeus, in exchange for bronze, the worth of a hundred oxen for nine.)

This rare comment from Homer to his audience suggests this preoccupation with fair exchange was theirs too.

It was touched on before that people of royal rank had a stock of treasure acquired from gift-exchanges which they recirculated when the opportunity presented itself. Hence Alcinous asked his princes to provide the expensive gifts from their stocks of treasure. The common people had to help pay for the 'prestation' but this was translated into grain or livestock, since they would have no treasure. Nevertheless, the two stores (treasure and livestock) were

completely separate. Alcinous could not have his treasure- room replenished on that occasion, and so he accepted household supplies as the only alternative. The rich clothing, gold and silver is kept in a special storehouse. Each royal house has one. Homer describes Penelope's visit to her treasure-room (21.5-10):

> κλίμακα δ'ὑφηλὴν προσεβήσετο οἷο δόμοιο,
> εἵλετο δὲ κληῖδ' εὐκαμπέα χειρὶ παχείῃ
> καλὴν χαλκείην: κώπη δ' ἐλέφαντος ἐπῆεν.
> βῆ δ'ἴμεναι θαλαμόνδε σὺν ἀμφιπόλοισι γυναιξὶν
> ἔσχατον: ἔνθα δέ οἱ κειμήλια κεῖτο ἄνακτος,
> χαλκός τε χρυσός τε πολύκμητός τε σίδηρος.
>
> (She went up the high staircase of her palace, and she took the well-shaped key in her strong hand, a fine bronze key: and the handle of it was of ivory. And she went up to the farthest chamber with her serving-women: and there lay the stored treasures of her lord, the bronze and gold and well-wrought iron.)

Mauss makes a statement which corresponds remarkably closely with the Homeric custom (p.42):

> "Many societies (Indian, Roman, Trobriand, Samoan and others) make a distinction in their property. They have the ordinary articles of consumption and distribution and perhaps also of sale. They have also the valuable family property- talismans, decorated coppers, skin blankets and embroidered fabrics."

These items are virtually identical to those Homeric characters keep in their storerooms. The contents of Odysseus' treasure-room are mentioned in Book Two (337-339):

Ὣς φάν: ὁ δ'ὑφόροφον θάλαμον κατεβήσετο πατρός,
εὐρύν,ὅθι νητὸς χρυσὸς καὶ χαλκὸς ἔκειτο
ἐσθής τ'ἐν κηλοῖσιν ἅλις τ'εὐῶδες ἔλαιον:

(So he spoke: and he [Telemachus] went down to the high-roofed, wide chamber of his father, where there lay piled up gold and bronze and clothing in chests and plenty of olive oil.)

The family treasure (Mauss uses the Latin term sacra) is increased or depleted as it is received or parted with on formal occasions. It is mobile: something to give or receive and pass on. With the transaction comes prestige, friendship and peaceful stability. These are the lasting acquisitions rather than the object itself.

Fear of the gods plays a large part in the role of gift-giving, particularly if one considers sacrifice as a form of prestation. The gods reign in some concept over every ancient or primitive society. The motives for making sacrifices to them are invariably appeasement for some evil, or bribery to ensure good fortune. These motives apply universally to societies, to the Homeric not the least. If one considers that me make offerings to the gods, in the hope of a service in return, in effect a type of gift-exchange is being performed. Mauss develops this premise:

"Among the first groups of beings with whom men must have made contracts were the spirits of the dead and the gods. They in fact are the real owners of the world's

> wealth... Sacrificial destruction implies giving something that is to be repaid."(p.13-14)

Another link with Greek mythology comes to mind: Ploutos, the Giver of Wealth, is closely associated with Pluton, the lord of the Underworld. Both names are connected with πλοῦτος, meaning 'wealth'.

The potlatch is an example of wholesale destruction of goods as a sacrificial offering. The reason for this, says Mauss, is (p.14):

> "...the belief that one has to buy from the gods and that the gods know how to repay the price."

This belief is apparent in the Odyssey, where it is usual for the characters to make sacrifices before a meal [26] or a journey, or before carrying out a special plan. More often, however, a sacrifice is made to accompany a particular prayer, in which the Homeric characters promise a sumptuous return should their prayer be granted. For example, Nestor prays to Athene to bring noble glory to himself and his family, and in return (3.382-384):

> σοὶ δ'αὖ ἐγὼ ῥέξω βοῦν ἡνὶν εὐρυμέτωπον,
> ἀδμήτην, ἣν οὔ πω ὑπὸ ζυγὸν ἤγαγεν ἀνήρ:
> τήν τοι ἐγὼ ῥέξω χρυσὸν κέρασιν περιχεύας.
>
> (I in turn will sacrifice to you a sleek, broad-browed cow, unbroken, which no man has ever put under the yoke: such will I sacrifice to you and pour gold around her horns.)

Just as the donor of the gift describes it in detail

so that the recipient realises the value of what he is receiving, so the gods are told precisely the nature of the sacrifice, so that they can make adequate reciprocation. As the lines quoted above show, gold was considered an enticing gift for man or god. The link between sacrifice and gift-exchange is emphasized even more in some lines, where the word δῶρα is used in the former context (13.358-360):

> ἀτὰρ καὶ δῶρα διδώσομεν, ὡς τὸ πάροϛ περ,
> αἴ κεν ἐᾷ πρόφρων με Διὸϛ θυγάτηρ ἀγελείη
> αὐτόν τε ζώειν καί μοι φίλον υἱὸν ἄέξῃ.
>
> (And indeed we shall give gifts, as in the past, if the kindly bestower of spoil, daughter of Zeus, allows me myself to live and my dear son too.)

And a further example uses the verb δίδωμι in connection with sacrificial offerings. Zeus says to Athene (1.65-67):

> πῶϛ ἂν ἔπειτ'' Οδυσῆοϛ ἐγὼ θείοιο λαθοίμην,
> ὃϛ περὶ μὲν νόον ἐστὶ βροτῶν, περὶ δ'ἱρὰ θεοῖσιν
> ἀθανάτοισιν ἔδωκε, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν;
>
> (How could I then forget the godly Odysseus, whose mind is superior to men, and who beyond all men gave offerings to the immortal gods who hold the wide heavens.)

Homer's gods do recognise then that generosity towards them is worthy of divine favour. Material gifts are offered to the gods (presumably placed on their altars) as well as sacrifices. Aegisthus makes thank-offerings to the gods for his success in murdering Agamemnon

and taking Clytemnestra (3.273-275):

> πολλὰ δὲ μηρία κῆε θεῶν ἱεροῖ ἐπὶ βωμοῖς,
> πολλὰ δ'ἀγάλματ'ἀνῆψεν, ὑφάσματά τε χρυσόν τε,
> ἐκτελέσας μέγα ἔργον, ὃ οὔ ποτε ἔλπετο θυμῷ.
>
> (He burned many thighs on the sacred altars
> of the gods and he piled up many votive
> offerings, tapestries and gold, having
> accomplished a great deed, which he
> in his heart had never expected.)

Sometimes sacrifices are made in an effort to prevent the gods from fulfilling evil intentions: Alcinous sees a prophesy coming true in part, and suggests a sacrifice to appease Poseidon (13.180-183):

> πομπῆς μὲν παύσασθε βροτῶν, ὅτε κέν τις ἵκηται
> ἡμέτερον προτὶ ἄστυ: Ποσειδάωνι δὲ ταύρους
> δώδεκα κεκριμένους ἱερεύσομεν, αἴ κ'ἐλεήσῃ,
> μηδ'ἡμῖν περίμηκες ὄρος πόλει ἀμφικαλύψῃ.
>
> (Cease from escorting mortal men, whenever
> one arrives at our city: We shall sacrifice
> twelve choice bulls to Poseiden, to see if
> he may pity us, and not overshadow our city
> with a huge mountain.)

The general difference between gift-giving to men and to gods is that the reciprocity between men is open-ended: the return gift does not necessarily have to take a particular form, nor is there a time limit for reciprocation. When dealing with the gods however, men expect an immediate and special return in accordance with their prayers. A futher difference is that something very great is expected in return for something relatively small. Furthermore, a loss of face is suffered by the man who does not make a worthy

return, but not by the gods; the people of Homeric society are too fearful of divine power to express any dissatisfaction. If they did, they might incur the wrath of the gods. All they can do is hope that their prayers will be granted.

The same motives were found by Mauss to exist in other societies (p.14-15):

> "Gifts to men and to gods have the further aim of buying peace. In this way evil influences are kept at bay..."

Sacrifices are also performed at meals where a guest is present. In this way the gods could take their share in the manifestation of hospitality to a stranger; it was apparently hoped that they would look favourably upon the contract of friendship established by the meal, and protect the bond with their divine power. In a similar way, primitive societies would include the gods in their feasts. Alcinous gives the order to his steward (7.179-181):

> "Ποντόνοε, κρητῆρα κερασσάμενος μέθυ νεῖμον
> πᾶσιν ἀνὰ μέγαρον, ἵνα καὶ Διὶ τερπικεραύνῳ
> σπείσομεν, ὅ ἰκέτῃσιν ἅμ'αἰδοίοισιν ὀπηδεῖ.
>
> (Pontonous, mix the wine in the bowl and serve it to everyone in the hall, so that we may make a libation to Zeus, delighting in thunder , who watches over suppliants who are also respect

Zeus is also believed to be the god who keeps strangers from going hungry. Menelaus tells Eteonus (4.33-35):

ἦ μὲν δὴ νῶϊ ξεινήϊα πολλὰ φαγόντε
ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων. δεῦρ' ἱκόμεθ', αἴ κέ ποθι Ζεὺς
ἐξοπίσω περ παύσῃ ὀϊζύος.

(Surely we had much hospitality from other men on our way here, if in any case Zeus may cease our suffering in the future.)

Hence the gods have an important part to play in the giving and receiving of gifts; either they are the donors or recipients themselves, or they are invoked as witnesses of an exchange or prestation.

Gift-giving is an integral part of marriage in any society. In some communities the bride and her family receive the gifts, in others her family provide a dowry for the prospective husband. Further, anthropologists have found that in some cases a system of gift exchange exists between the two families. Mauss cites Thurnwald, who examined two tribes with relation to marriage by purchase, ie., gifts from the groom to the bride's family (p.30):

> "In reality, this includes prestations from all sides, including the bride's family, and a wife is sent back if her if her relatives have not offered sufficient gifts in return."

Wedding gifts in the Odyssey have long been a source of debate, because their portrayal does not appear to be consistent. One fierce controversy arose because the notions of dowry and bride-price both appear[27]. There are two schools of thought about the composition

of the Homeric poems: the Unitarians believe that the works were composed by one man, Homer; the Analysts believe that the poems as we have them are an amalgam of stories by different composers, not necessarily composed all at the same time. The Analysts tend to use the references to dowry and bride-price in the text as proof of elements of different authors, but Finley and others consider that the two practices ran in tandem as another example of gift-exchange. Finley says [28]:

> "There is much talk in the Odyssey about 'the gifts of wooing', and the successful suitor, who reminds one of nothing so much as the highest bidder at an auction, in turn received his counter-gift in the dowry, which normally accompanied the bride."

Although both types of gift occur, the gifts of wooing predominate. The former type, dowry, is understood from a statement by Telemachus to one of the suitors (20.342):

> γήμασθ'ᾧ κ'ἐθέλῃ, ποτὶ δ'ἄσπετα δῶρα δίδωμι.
>
> (Let her marry whom she wishes, and I shall give countless gifts.)

There are several examples of bride-price, or <u>ἕδνα</u>:

> μνώμενοι ἀντιθέην ἄλοχον καὶ ἕδνα διδόντες.(11.117)
>
> (Wooing your godlike wife and giving her gifts of wooing.)

The prevalence, however,of one type over the other is demanded by the narrative: Penelope does not wish to

remarry, hence her dowry is not advertised. Each suitor is trying to outdo the others in the value of his gifts in order to win her: this rivalry is mentioned repeatedly. It is precisely the same situation which we find among the Kwakiutl Indians. Mauss tells us (p.4-5):

> "But the agonistic character of the prestation is pronounced. Essentially usurious and extravagant, it is above all a struggle among nobles to determine their position in the hierarchy to the ultimate benefit, if they are successful, of their own clans."

The likeness is so exact that Mauss could have been talking about the suitors in the Odyssey. The gifts they offer to Penelope are merely the initial prestation, and the exchange would only be completed when they are accepted, and Penelope agrees to marry:- her service in return, with the additional counter-gift of the dowry from her family.

The Homeric word <u>ἔδνα</u> is the one we usually translate as 'bride-price', but it is found once in the context of dowry(1.276-278):

> ἂψ ἴτω ἐς μέγαρον πατρὸς μέγα δυναμένοιο:
> οἱ δὲ γάμον τεύξουσι καὶ ἀρτυνέουσιν ἔεδνα
> πολλὰ μάλ', ὅσσα ἔοικε φίλης ἐπὶ παιδὸς ἕπεσθαι.
>
> (Let her go back to the palace of her powerful father: and they shall organise a wedding and prepare a huge dowry, such as is fitting to go with a dear daughter.)

In this example it is obviously the task of the bride's

family, not just her father, to prepare the wedding and the dowry. And yet Telemachus speaks (20.342) as though it is his responsibility to provide the dowry. If for some reason the bride is sent back to her father and family, then it seems that the husband's family have to pay back her dowry. Telemachus is unwilling to send Penelope back to her father because, he says (2.132-133):

> κακὸν δέ με πόλλ'ἀποτίνειν
> Ἰκαρίῳ, αἴ κ'αὐτὸς ἑκὼν ἀπὸ μητέρα πέμψω.
>
> (It would be bad for me to pay a lot back to Icarius, if I of my own free will send back my mother.)

We have seen that all the bride's family is involved in the dowry. Telemachus has the responsibility of returning the dowry if necessary, since he is next in importance to Odysseus in the family. In the same way, the bride-price is not something which concerns only the groom: no matter which suitor wins Penelope, they are all expected to help provide the marriage-feast (18.279-280):

> κούρης δαῖτα φίλοισι, καὶ ἀγλαὰ δῶρα διδοῦσιν:
> ἀλλ'οὐκ ἀλλότριον βίοτον νήποινον ἔδουσιν.
>
> (A feast for the dear ones [29] of the lady, and they give her fine gifts: but they do not devour with impunity another man's livelihood.)

The relatives benefit from the wedding, since they receive something from it too. The family seem to

be the recipients of the bride-price, at least in part. An example is seen when Eumaeus is telling Odysseus of a girl with whom he grew up; her parents, when she reached marriageable age,

> τὴν μὲν ἔπειτα Σάμηνδ'ἔδοσαν καὶ μυρί'ἔλοντο.(15.367)
>
> (Then gave her to someone in Same and got a vast amount for her.)

Just as the bridegroom's family can be corstrained to return the dowry, so the bride's family are bound to return the gifts of wooing if the bride is unfaithful (8.317-318):

> ἀλλά σφωε δόλος καὶ δεσμὸς ἐρύξει,
> εἰς ὅ κέ μοι μάλα πάντα πατὴρ ἀποδῷσιν ἕεδνα,
>
> (But my trick and trap shall hold them until her father gives back absolutely all the gifts of wooing to me.)

Although this incident occurs 'among the gods' it is likely to have precedents, as most other social customs of theirs do, in mortal society.

Finally there is another piece of evidence which shows how the whole 'clan' is involved in a wedding-match: when the suitors discuss the possibility that Telemachus may too have been lost at sea like his father, one of them says (2.335-336):

> κτήματα γάρ κεν πάντα δασαίμεθα, οἰκία δ'αὖτε
> τούτου μητέρι δοῖμεν ἔχειν ἠδ'ὅς τις ὀπυίοι.
>
> (For we would divide up all the possessions, and further we would give the house to his mother to have, and to whomsoever she marries.)

Further reference is made to this (16.385)[30]:

δασσάμενοι κατὰ μοῖραν ἐφ'ἡμέας,

(Dividing up [the estate] into proper shares among us)

Hence the house becomes the property of Penelope and her new husband, but the estate is shared among the suitors as the 'kinsmen' of the groom.

When Athene comes to tell Telemachus at the palace of Menelaus that his mother is being urged to marry, she says (15.17-18):

ὁ γὰρ περιβάλλει ἅπαντας
μνηστῆρας δώροισι καὶ ἐξώφελλεν ἔεδνα:

(For he excels over all the suitors with his gifts and he has greatly increased his gifts of wooing.)

What this distinction means is unclear unless δώροισι is a general term while ἔεδνα refers specifically to the contractual gifts for the marriage. Presumably an adequate return in the form of a dowry would be expected, and so each suitor would make clear what he was offering in the exchange (cf.18.292-300). The ἔεδνα may become the property of the bride's father and family, while the δῶρα are specifically for the bride:- hence the jewellery offered by the suitors is described as δῶρα [31]. Furthermore, these gifts are presumably hers to keep, regardless of whom she decides to marry. She is told by Antinous (18.287):

δέξασθ! οὐ γὰρ καλὸν ἀνήνασθαι δόσιν ἐστίν:

(Accept; for it is not good to refuse a gift.)

The conclusion we may draw from these examples from the text is that the Homeric system of marriage gifts is the same as the one we find in many primitive societies: a series of gifts is given from the bride's 'clan' to the groom's 'clan', and counter-gifts are received. Neither gifts of wooing nor dowry exist alone: they are tokens of the formalisation of the marriage. When the contract is broken, the gifts have to be returned. Hence the appearance of the two types of wedding gifts in the Odyssey does not confirm that the epic is an amalgam of customs from different eras; rather their existence affirms the unity of the portrayal of Homeric society.

Such is the picture of gift-giving which we find in the Odyssey. The general conclusion which Sahlins [2] reaches is:

> "The gift is reason. It is the triumph of rationality over the folly of war...composing society, the gift was the liberation of culture...the gift is progress."(p.175)

In the concluding chapter the extent of the similarities -and differences- of the role of the gift in Homeric and other societies will be evaluated.

NOTES

1. Contractual in the sense that the exchange of gifts is the formal expression of a contract of friendship.
2. M.D. Sahlins, Stone Age Economics, (Chicago, 1972).
3. Nature in the sense of a spiritual presence.
4. See chapter 1, note 2.
5. B.Malinowski, The Argonauts of the Western Pacific, (New York, 1961), p.179.
6. The Gift,p.17-37.
7. The Argonauts of the Western Pacific, p.176-190.
8. Stone Age Economics.
9. Ibid., p.193ff.
10. This begins at book 6 when Odysseus meets Nausicaa and ends at book 13.187, taking up over a quarter of the Odyssey.
11. cf. 6.192-193; 8.389; 8.403-405; 8.424; 11.339-340; 11.351-352; 13.10-15.
12. cf. 8.392-394; 8.403-405; 8.425; 8.430; 8.441; 8.455; 13.10-14; 13.135-136.
13. See 10.19-20.
14. See 5.333-350.
15. Stone Age Economics, p.193ff.
16. cf. 4.132. Book 4, 613-619 is an identical passage to the one quoted; it is interesting that the line numbers are also the same in books 4 and 15.
17. cf. 24.75.

18. B.Malinowski's Crime and Custom in Savage Society, (London, 1932), p.40.
19. The Gift, p.22.
20. cf. 18.323, where the meaning is more 'child's toys'.
21. See 10.19-20.
22. See 10.287-288. Such gifts constitute the folklore elements of the Odyssey.
23. The Gift, p.31.
24. Ibid.
25. J.P.Gould, "Hiketeia", JHS 93, 1973, p.75.
26. See 13.24-45.
27. For interesting arguments from the anthropologists' point of view, see M.Hasluck, "Bride-Price in Albania: a Homeric parallel", Man, 1933, p.191-195; J.L.Myres, "Homeric and Albanian Bride-Price", Man, 1933, P.195-196; G.W.B.Huntingford, "Bride-Price in Antiquity; Further Alternatives for this Term", Man, 1931, p.190-191.
28. The World of Odysseus, p.64.
29. For the Homeric use of φίλος see H.Kakridis, La Notion de l'Amitié et de l'hospitalité chez Homère, (Thessaloniki, 1963), chapter 1.
30. The rest of the line and the next are identical to 2.335-336.
31. See 18.291 and 18.301.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSION: THE ROLE OF THE GIFT IN THE ODYSSEY

> "The gift is in fact the only way of facilitating exchange in a moneyless subsistence economy without any overarching laws."[1]

Carney's comment illustrates the similarity between primitive and Homeric society, for it could be applied to either. We do not see a system of laws in the Odyssey: what we see are moral values which are as binding as laws. No money changes hands, only gifts, which at times approach our idea of payment. Nevertheless they are gifts: Malinowski [2], in a discussion of Melanesian customs, considers

> "...although there exist forms of barter pure and simple, there are so many transitions and gradations between that and simple gift, that it is impossible to draw any fixed line between trade on the one hand, and exchange of gifts on the other."

This argument is equally applicable to the Odyssey, in which we have seen countless types of gift-giving.

The similarities between the primitive societies Mauss studied and the society of the Odyssey are obviously numerous. In the latter we have found evidence of the potlatch, contractual gifts of kinship and alliance, the same system of wedding gifts, and even the same type of precious articles given as gifts. We have also found Homeric words which specify and

explain a particular kind of gift, just as Mauss found that

> "The somewhat immature legal language of the Trobrianders has multiplied the names distinguishing all kinds of prestations and counter prestations according to the name of the prestation, the thing given, the circumstances, and so on."p.28-29)

There is a class-system in the Odyssey of the poor, the rich (the heroes), and the gods. It seems that gifts are not exchanged across some class-barriers. The gods may 'give' to mortals, but a mortal may not offer a gift to a god he meets in the guise of a human being. When Telemachus offers Athene (who is disguised as Mentes) a parting gift, she refuses (1.315), and tells him that he should give her one later, when she returns. The gods, however, do give each other gifts: we are told (8.269) of the many gifts Ares gave to Aphrodite.

The rich give alms to the poor, says Mauss(p.15):

> "because otherwise Nemesis will take vengeance upon the excessive wealth and happiness of the rich by giving to the poor and the gods."

The Homeric concept of supplication and the moral obligation of giving a suppliant food and clothing is probably sustained by the same principle. Hence a fear of the gods plays a large part in the giving to the poor by the rich.

The sociological conclusion we may draw is that the gift is the means by which social relations are furthered within the class-system of Homeric society, without the poor becoming richer, and the rich becoming poorer. Precious gifts are given from one noble to another: never to a poorer man. He receives only the basic requirements of food and clothing. The rich never lose their wealth, since it is always sustained by the moral obligation of a 'worthy return'. If they lose on one exchange, they may gain on the next.

Another conclusion we may draw is that the picture of gift-giving in the Odyssey corresponds so well with gift-exchange in primitive societies as described by Mauss, that we may use Homer as an example to support Mauss' accuracy. In the same way we may consider Mauss' work supportive evidence for a 'real' Homeric society. If Homer were writing about an imaginary society it would be impossible for him to paint such an accurate picture of an all-embracing sociological concept unknown to him. If one accepts the validity of this argument, one must then find a date for this Homeric society: a feat which we do not feel qualified to attempt.

NOTES

1. T.F.Carney, The Economics of Antiquity, (Kansas, 1973), p.60.
2. B.Malinowski, The Argonauts of the Western Pacific, (New York, 1961), p.176.

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